The American Journal of Anthropomorphics

ISSUE
3
$10.00

Foreword by the Editor

"What is this book about? What, exactly, are anthropomorphics?" is the question most people ask upon seeing this publication. The answer to the second question is simple: an anthropomorphic character is any object or animal given human-like attributes that they do not normally possess. This type of character is most often associated with those seen in today's cartoons, though hardly limited to that aspect. Anthropomorphic characters can be found in hundreds of places, from story books to works of science-fiction and fantasy. As to the first...

When you think about it, you will realize that this sort of characterization is all about us; they are used to sell cereals, video games, snack foods, cigarettes, clothing... the use of anthropomorphic characters in advertising has been steadily growing, and shows no sign of abating. Cute animal characters sell products. Simple, proven fact.

However, the anthropomorphic artist occupies a special niche. Unlike normal characterizations, drawing these sort of characters **well** requires a great deal of specialized skill. Many conventional artists find it difficult to produce these sort of characterizations. Yet despite this, skilled artists who draw in this genre are difficult to find; before the Journal, there was no national reference for them and their work. Many companies and advertising agencies used to wind up having to take the best thing at hand, their clients losing out on the extra sales a more eye-catching character could have brought them.

Today, the Journal acts as volumes of "head shots" do for actors and actresses. Interested companies and individuals perusing the art will find contact information for each of the featured artists. In addition, having issues of the Journal on hand provides a powerful tool for matching a particular style of art to a given item, idea, theme or client. The more issues one has, the wider the range of choices available.

A concerted effort was made to produce a very high quality product, from the layout and content to the selection of paper, cover stock and binding. We hope you enjoy it. Thank you for supporting our efforts on behalf of the artists herein!

Darrell Benvenuto
Editor-in-Chief
March, 1995

The American Journal of Anthropomorphics

MARCH 1995 ISSUE No. 3

ARTWORK

Eric Schwartz..... 1
Shea Ryan..... 7
Terrie Smith..... 13
Kenneth Sample..... 19
Daphne Lage..... 25
Josef Ricketts..... 31
Joseph D. Ny..... 37
Ronald Van Bokhoven..... 43
Joshua Kennedy..... 49
Genesis Eve Cook..... 55
Taral Wayne..... 61
Timothy Fay..... 67
Michelle Parker..... 73

GRAPHIC STORIES

Artist	Title	Page
Kjartan Arnorsson	Open Season	77
Bill Fitts	Home Sweet Span	87
Craig Carrington	Dream City	93

STORIES

Tales from the Reservation..... 105

COVERS

"A Two-Fisted Christmas" (Front), and "The Awakening" (Rear)
By Steven Martin, Illustrator.

(Contact Information for cover artist is listed in the Editor's Alley)

The American Journal of Anthropomorphics (ISSN 1071-8745, ISBN 1-887038-00-0) is published semi-annually by Med Systems Company, Post Office Box 580009, Flushing, NY 11358-0009; Phone: (718) 762-7004; Fax: (718) 359-2768 and is Registered Copyright © 1995 by Med Systems Company. All Rights Reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part of any text or illustration of this publication via any means without written permission from either the publisher or artist or holder of the copyright in question is strictly prohibited. All works contained herein have been reproduced under contract with the permission of the artists or holders of the copyrights.
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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

THE EDITOR'S ALLEY

News, Updates and Future Directions

THE PAST

As many have noted, this issue of the Journal is not only smaller than was intended, but does not have a color section, as we originally planned. This is directly due to the sad fact that large numbers of Issue #2 were misbound and miscut by Brenner Printing. The printer sent hundreds of defective copies of the Journal out to the major distributors without any quality control; many arrived at their destinations literally falling out of their covers, while others had their spines break upon opening, and miscut pages wouldn't open at all. Some retailers rejected their order; many more got the word on the issue and simply did not order any. We have been losing money replacing damaged and defective copies for free. As a result, sales were lower than expected through our distribution channels and Diamond Distribution has declined to continue listing that issue. Basically, this all means that less funds were available to print this issue than were expected, despite our delaying the print date. The effect that Brenner's mangling of Issue #2 will have on future sales of the Journal, however well bound and printed, through these distribution channels has yet to be seen, but repercussions will no doubt rebound for at least three issues to come. At least this experience has taught us who not to use as a print house.

If you received a damaged copy of Issue #2 of the Journal, or your copy has since suffered cover separation, return it to us and we will replace it with a new, inspected copy at no additional cost.

ADVERTISEMENT

A series of advertisements have been placed in Creativity Magazine and Advertising Age, moving the Journal forward in its role as a reference work of freelance artists for the Advertising Industry. Coupled with the company's new nationwide (800) order lines, sales of the Journal should increase, good news for readers and artists alike.

CONNECTIONS

Med Systems runs a small but pleasant multi-node BBS that contains, among many other things, thousands of top-quality image files of anthropomorphic artwork, plus hundreds of nationwide echomail conferences. It can be reached 24 hours a day at (718) 886-6797 at all modem speeds up to 16.8 Kbps. Leave a message to the system operator after getting on to ensure rapid validation and access.

REAPPEARANCES

Several artists have been featured in multiple issues of the Journal. This is usually due to one of two reasons: either the artist has several different techniques of illustration, requiring more than a single section to display or they submitted a graphic story that required more than one issue to feature. When there has been space available in subsequent issues, these artists have had the other facets of their work shown.

PARTICIPATION

You want to submit something to us for possible publication? Great! Drop a note in the mail to the following address and we will get you off an artist's submission packet for our next issue. This packet will contain a half-completed royalty contract, which, when you complete your half, protects you against any misuse of the materials you submit. It also contains information on what kinds of work we are looking for, how to prepare and mail your work to us and more.

Med Systems Company
Post Office Box 580009
Flushing, NY 11358-0009

INFORMATION

If you have any questions, comments or would like to subscribe to the Journal, drop us a note. We'd love to hear from you, as reader feedback is our best guide towards making a better publication. If you are an advertising agency or executive and would like to get in contact with one or more of the artists contained herein, give us a call at the number in the table of contents and we will put the artist(s) in contact with you that day.

The Editor of the Journal can also be contacted through:

FidoNet/Netmail	1:278/523 or 1:278/3000
Internet E-Mail	benvenut@qcunix.acc.qc.edu
CompuServe	72530,2227

COVERS

Apologies to Ms. Livingstone, whose previous submission to the Journal (Issue #2) was accidentally misplaced.

Previous Issue (#2): (Front Cover)	Monika Livingstone Post Office Box 1299 Cupertino, CA 95015-1299
This Issue's Covers:	Steven Martin 12932 Yorba Street Santa Ana, CA 92705

THE FUTURE

The goal of adding a color section to the Journal, as originally expressed in Issue #2, is at the top of our list. Unfortunately, a mere ten full color pages more than doubles our print costs. Were we selling directly to the consumer, this would not be a problem. However, dealing through distributors cuts down on our options. Until our circulation grows large enough that we can have color, we are planning on adding more pages & artists!

Eric Schwartz

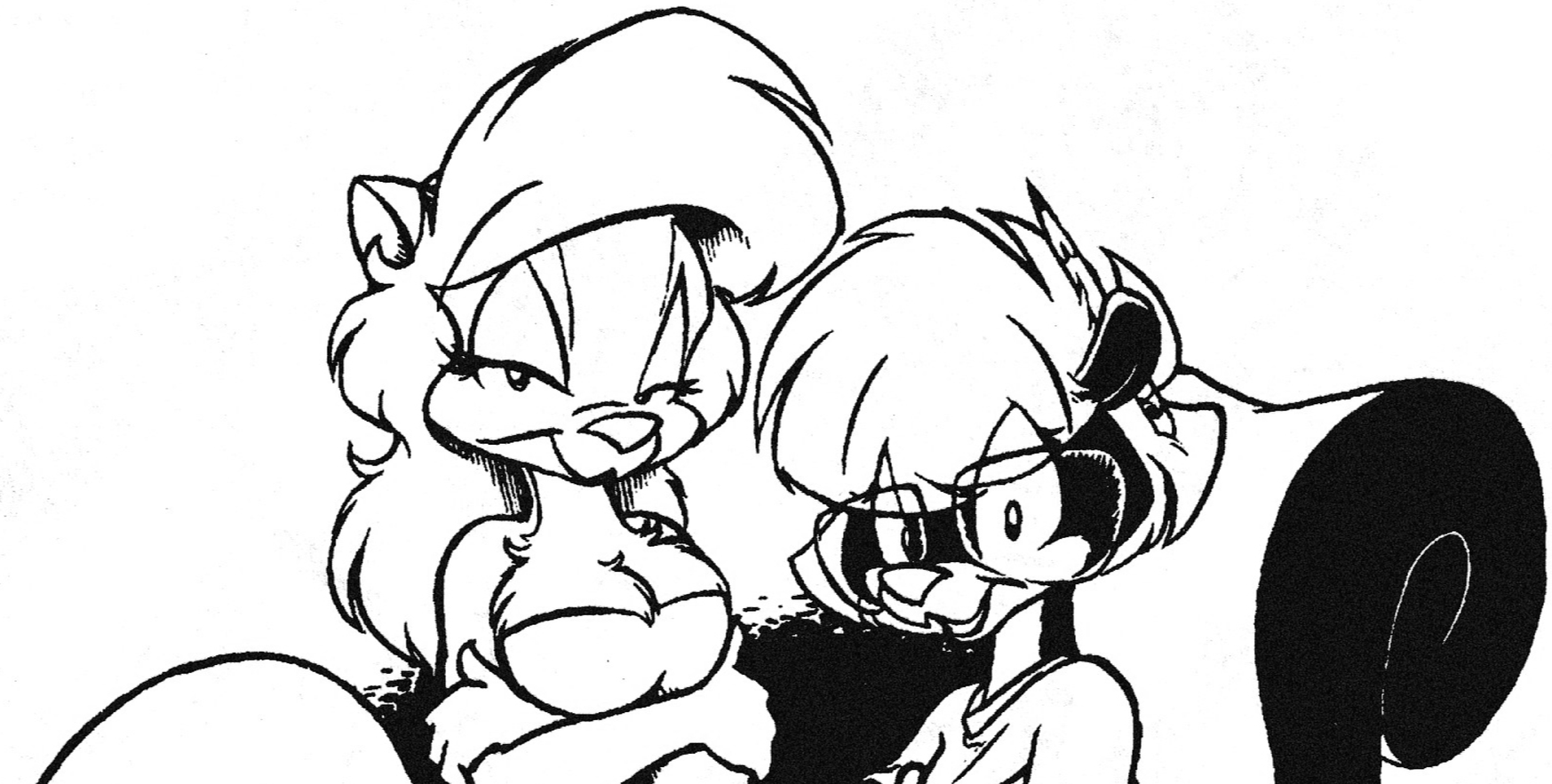
Background

Widely known for his series of animations in the computer field featuring his character Amy the Squirrel, Eric has appeared in Issue #2 of the Journal, as well as elsewhere. He attends conventions all across the United States, including PhilCon and Confurence. A talented artist and animator, he has a promising future in the industry. Eric has a number of his animations available for sale on videotape, as well as many illustrations in B&W and color for sale. Write to him for more information.

Commissioned Artwork

Eric does not often accept commissions, as he is kept busy with a heavy workload of existing projects, but when his schedule permits, he does. His prices vary according to the medium and complexity of the requested piece(s).

Eric Schwartz
Eric Schwartz Productions
Post Office Box 292684
Kettering, OH 45429-0684

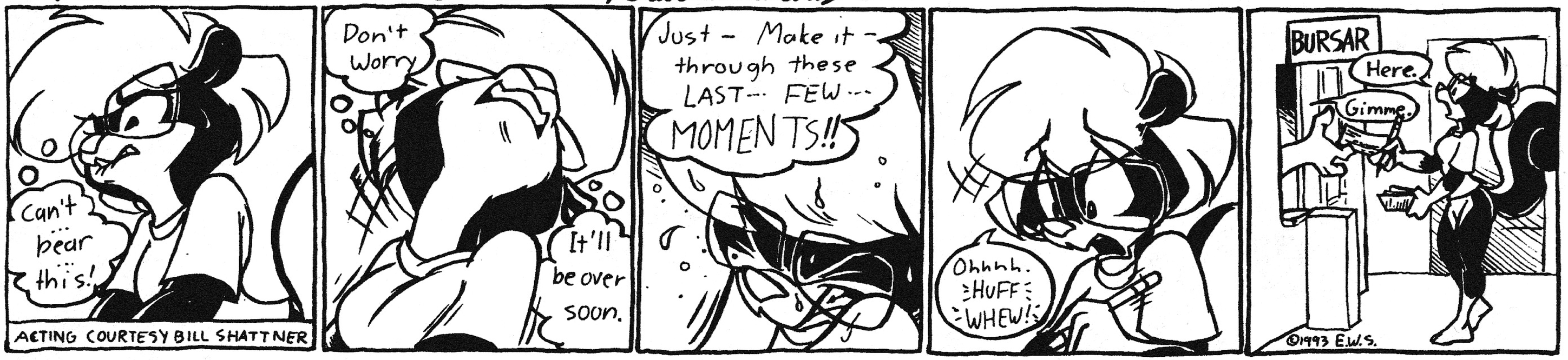


SQUIRREL & SKUNKWORKS

ERIC W. SCHWARTZ
COMMITTED CARTOONIST

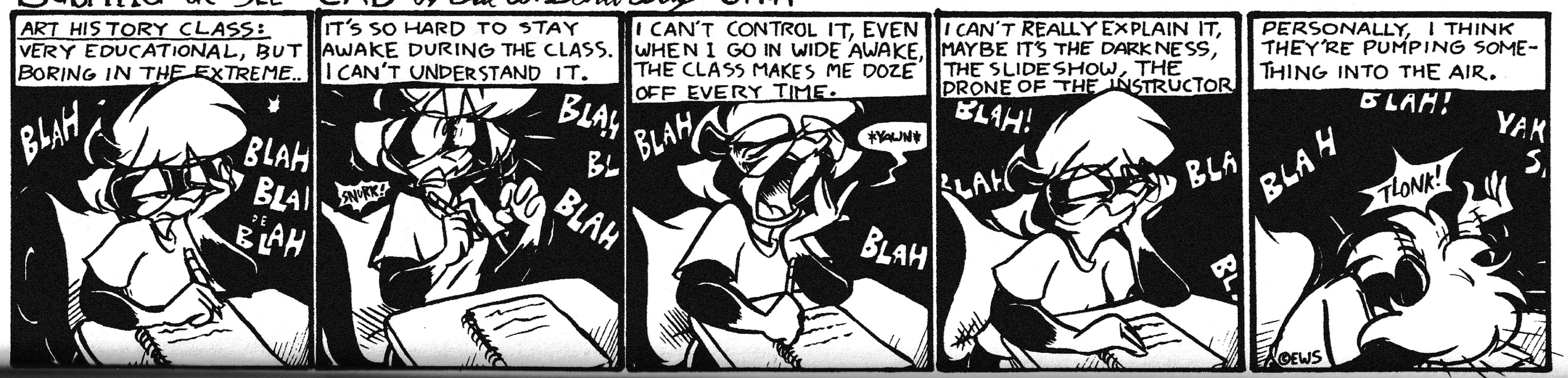
POTATO
CHIPS

SABRINA at See-CAD by Eric W. Schwartz ©1993



Sabrina* at See-CAD by Eric W. Schwartz ©1994

Sabrina* at SEE-CAD by Eric W. Schwartz ©1994



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Sabrina at See-CAD by Eric W. Schwartz ©1994

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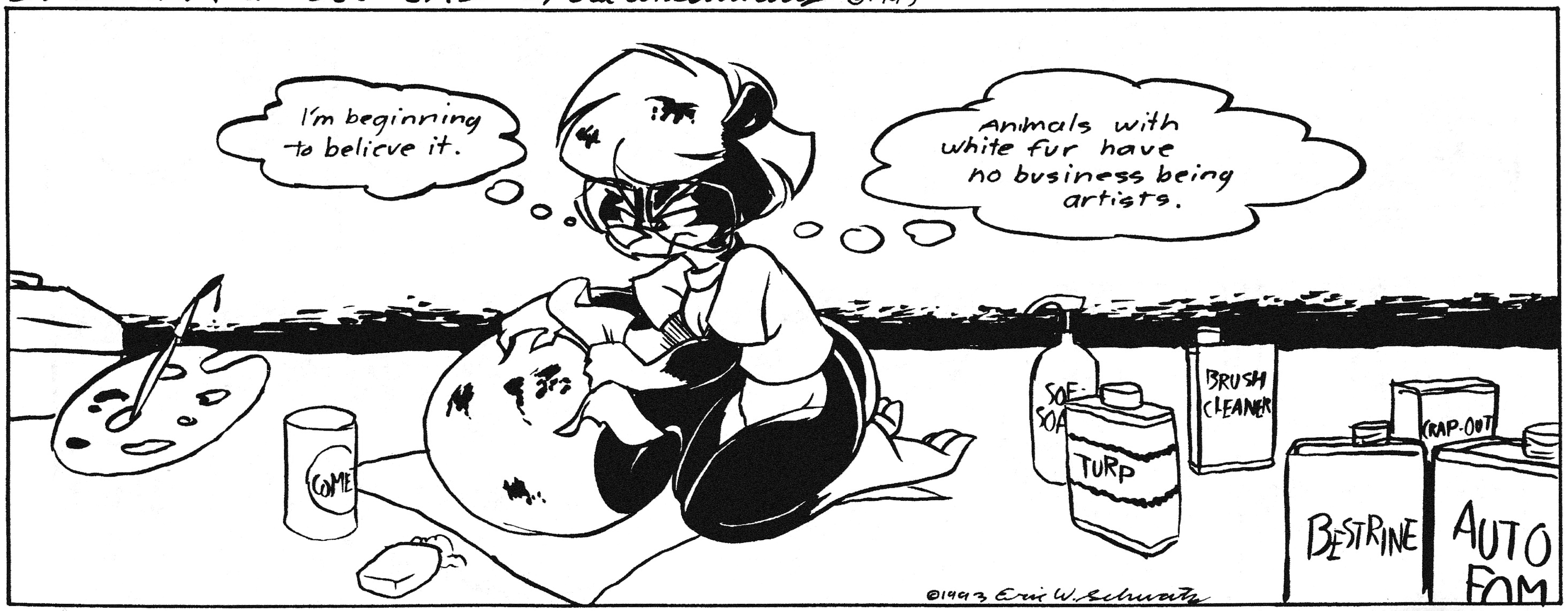


Shea Ryan

Background

Shea Ryan's pen and ink work can be found in a wide variety of publications, from Science Fiction/Fantasy roleplaying products (GDW, Steve Jackson Games, Heraldic Games, etc.) to illustrating children's books for a national publishing house. She is currently engaged in producing two anthropomorphic comic series; "Boulder Rocks", a dramatic look at the highs and lows of life in a Colorado Blues-Rock band, and "L'il Willy", a skewed slice 'o life through the foibles and quests of a pool-shootin', good-intentioned "every man" mongrel. When she attends conventions, Shea can usually be found at MarCon and GenCon.

Commissioned Artwork

Shea is currently accepting commissions. The price will vary depending on the complexity of the request and the medium desired. She has, however, established a base fee of $20 for a single, 8.5 x 11" B&W inked character, and has several portfolios of artwork available for sale.

Ms. Shea Ryan
46 Michigan Avenue
Greenwood Court
Bloomington, IL 61704
(309) 827-7316

1994

Steve Rude
© 1994

1·9·9·4

RE: CHICO, MOJO, bobbi-KAT, SANTANA & SCOUT of "BOULDER ROCKS" © SHEA RYAN, 1994. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED, ETC. ETC...

SANTANA & FAMILY. FROM "BOULDER ROCKS", © SHEA RYAN, 1994. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED, ETC. ETC...

Terrie Smith

Background

Born in the mythical land of Cape Cod, Terrie has traveled all around the world. She has been drawing ever since she could pick up a crayon. She attended the University of Tennessee, majoring in art. Contrary to popular rumor, Terrie does not just do "<blank>" art. She does elves, centaurs, wildlife and anthropomorphic, or "furry" art. Her tools vary from an airbrush to a computer tablet. She has done countless illustrations for various fanzines, penciling and inking for several comic companies, and has done all phases of "full frame" animation on computer for education, TV and theatrical release. She is currently working on a graphic novel, and is planning to publish a series of stories from her popular "Medicine Shield" series of art.

Commissioned Artwork

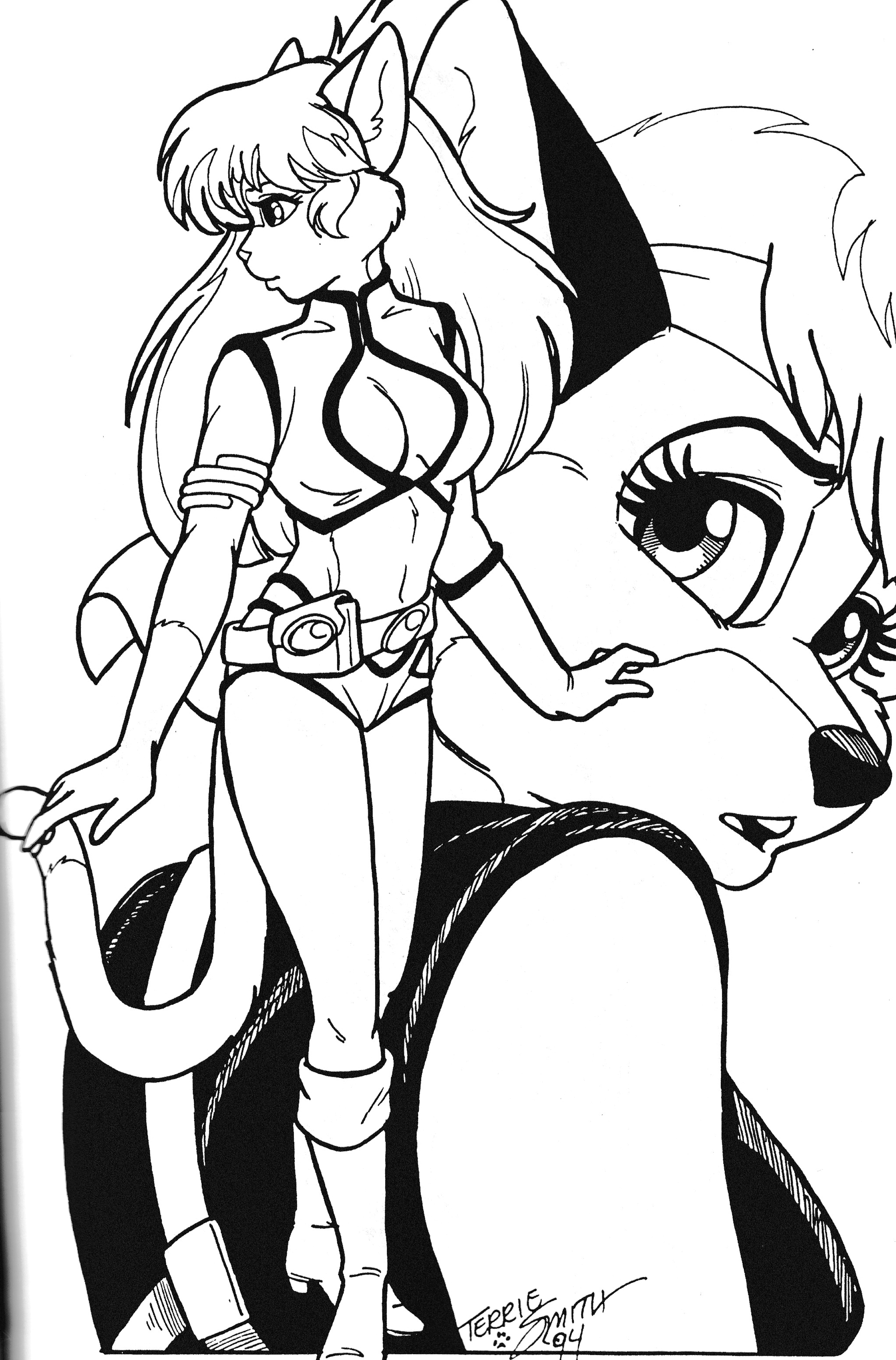
Ms. Smith is accepting commissions. The price will generally vary depending on the complexity and medium of the request. Due to her tremendous workload, she advises you to be prepared to wait.

Her fixed rates for simple illustration are:

9x12"	B&W Inked	$30
9x12"	Color	$40
11x14"	B&W Inked	$40
11x14"	Color	$50

Larger and smaller sizes can be negotiated.

Ms. Terrie Smith
3675 Bellingham Avenue
San Diego, CA 92104


TERRIE SMITH '94

TERRIE SMITH
©93

TERRIE SMITH ©94

TERRIE SMITH
©94

Kenneth Sample

Background

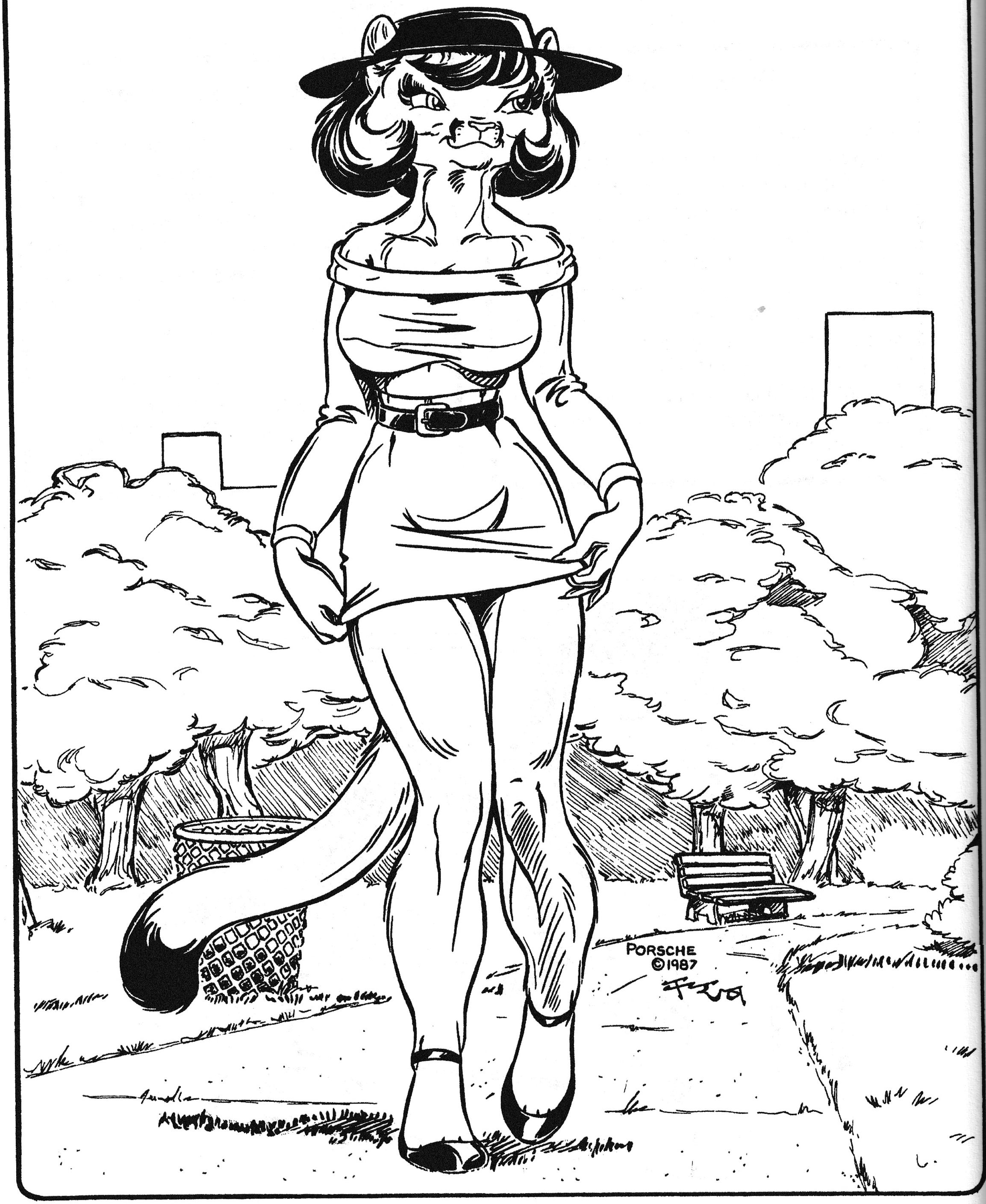
Ken Sample has been drawing for as long as he can remember and has been drawing anthropomorphic characters / "Furries" (He calls them 'Exotics') since 1975. His style developed from a love of Late '70s Marvel Comics and Television animation; action, motion and character personality are the main thrusts to his work. His work has appeared in random publications and APAs over the years. He was the illustrator for the Role-Playing Game, "Other Suns". He uses line art as his sole medium.

Commissioned Artwork

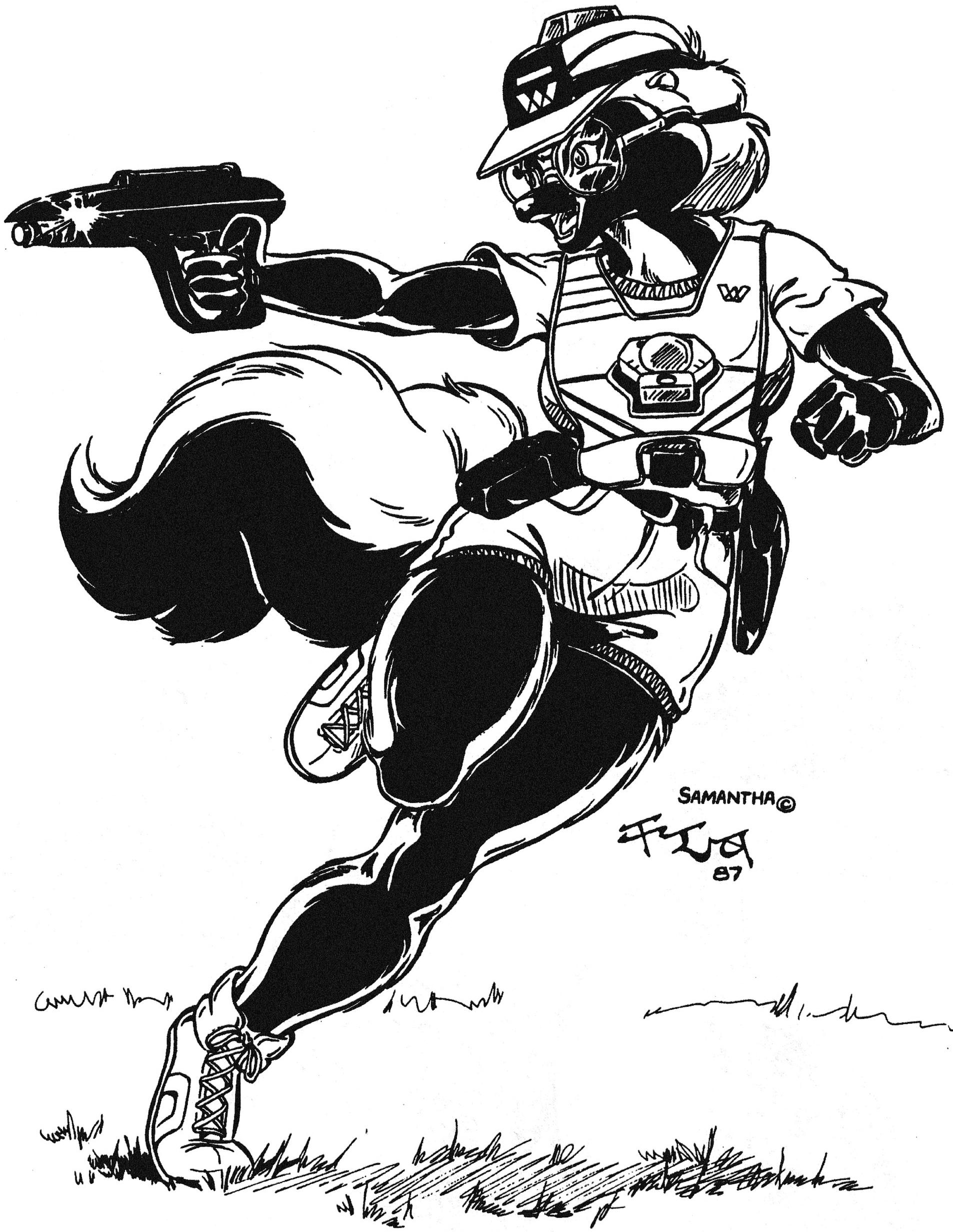
Mr. Sample is available for commissions, though he works very slowly. The price will vary depending on the complexity of the request. Mr. Sample reserves the right to reject any commission offer. He has a number of B&W and Color prints of his work available for sale. For info on them, send a SASE to him at:

Mr. Kenneth Sample
24 Alastair Place
Colonia, NJ 07067-1203

Porsche Hauer Copyright © 1987, 1994 Kenneth R Sample, All Rights Reserved. Image cannot be reproduced without permission of the artist.



Natasha Copyright © 1991, 1994 Kenneth R Sample, All Rights Reserved. Image cannot be reproduced without permission of the artist.



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Trina DuBois Copyright © 1989, 1994 Kenneth R Sample, All Rights Reserved. Image cannot be reproduced without permission of the artist.

BOBBI SIERRA
FUN
94.6

Daphne Lage

Background

Daphne was born in Valencia, Spain, in 1971, and has been drawing anthropomorphic characters from a very young age. Her goal was originally a career in animation, instilled by the animations of Walt Disney.

Ms. Lage entered the School of Visual Arts on a full, four-year scholarship. She was lured away from her original goal of being an animator by the world of comic book illustration, and in June of 1993 her first anthropomorphic comic book series, Tall Tails, saw release under the banner of Golden Realm Unlimited, Inc. Copies of Tall Tails and other GRU publications are available through Ms. Lage.

Ms. Lage's dynamic, flowing style of illustration has drawn many favorable comments from viewers. Her work maintains a uniformly high graphic density, consistently rich with detail and texture.

Ms. Lage's artwork has been featured in Issue #1 of the Journal, as well as Furloose!, Bestiary, Midnight Sands and Furplay, to name a few.

Ms. Lage has also illustrated the story, Tales from the Reservation, in this issue.

Due to the U.S. Post Office making a mistake, many pieces of mail written to Ms. Lage early in the year were turned away from her Post Office Box. The problem has finally been corrected, and any mail sent should now get through without any difficulty.

Commissioned Artwork

Ms. Lage does a large quantity of commissioned artwork and has established a fairly regular pricing system for compositions consisting of no more than two characters. Artwork requests with more characters or complex details are negotiated separately. Illustration requests can range from anthropomorphic to anime in nature.

9x12	Pencil Linework	$ 20.00
9x12	Inked Line Art	$ 30.00
9x12	Ink and Marker	$ 40.00
9x12	Grey Tone Pencil	$ 50.00
9x12	Color Pencil	$ 60.00
11x14	Pencil Linework	$ 30.00
11x14	Inked Line Art	$ 40.00
11x14	Ink and Marker	$ 50.00
11x14	Grey Tone Pencil	$ 60.00
11x14	Color Pencil	$ 70.00

Animation Cels, with your character(s) inked and painted on acetate, then mounted over a decorative background.

9x12	Animation Cel	$150.00

Ms. Lage reserves the right to reject any commission request. Guidelines are available by mail if required.

Send mail, money orders and commission specifications to

Ms. Daphne Lage
FDR Station, Post Office Box 671
New York, NY 10150

The Truth Is Out There
Furry Bureau of Investigation

THE X FILES

Furry Bureau of Investigation

Daphne Gaz
©1994

Britanny + Peter ©GRU INC.

Holidays
Happy

Josef Ricketts

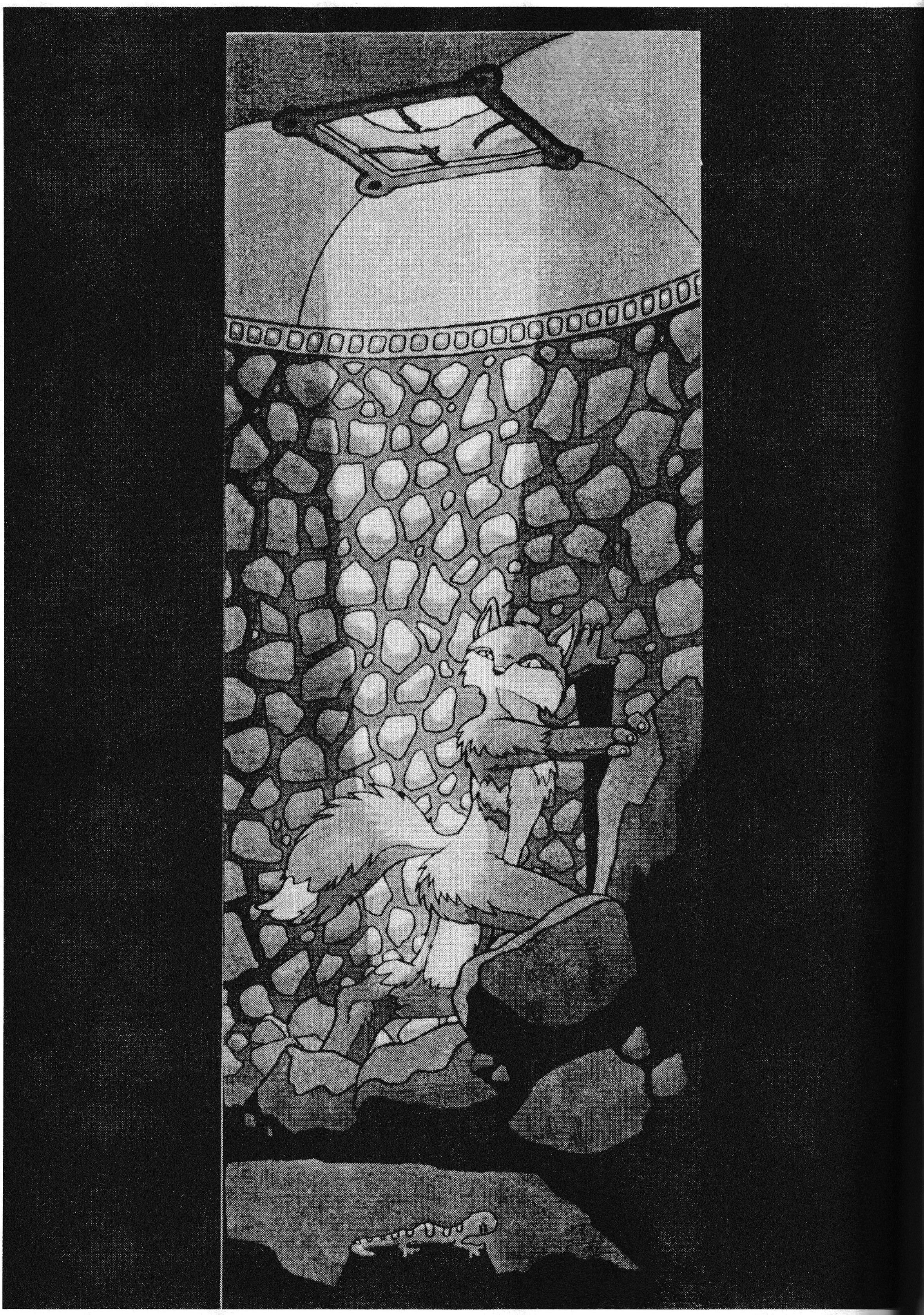
Background

A student of the art and science of light, Josef is capable of rendering extremely complicated and eye-catching pieces. His works are intense and striking, making use of strong contrasts to set the theme. His work has appeared in numerous publications, including the first issue of the Journal. He now returns, displaying some new techniques.

Commissioned Artwork

Mr. Ricketts is currently accepting contracts and commissions. The price will vary depending on the complexity and medium of the request.

Mr. Josef Ricketts
400 West 29th, #9
Austin, TX 78705



Joseph D. Ny

Background

A computer hobbyist, Mr. Ny's work is unique and recognizable. Using his computer as a medium, his use of simple lines, flat tones and striking color themes give his works great visual impact. His illustrations have been featured in publications by Antarctic Press, as well as numerous small press publications. Joe can be found at ConFurence West and ConFurence East, where he and his wife sell prints and other works. He has a large number of prints for sale, and offers GIF images over the InterNet. Write him for more information, and provide a SASE.

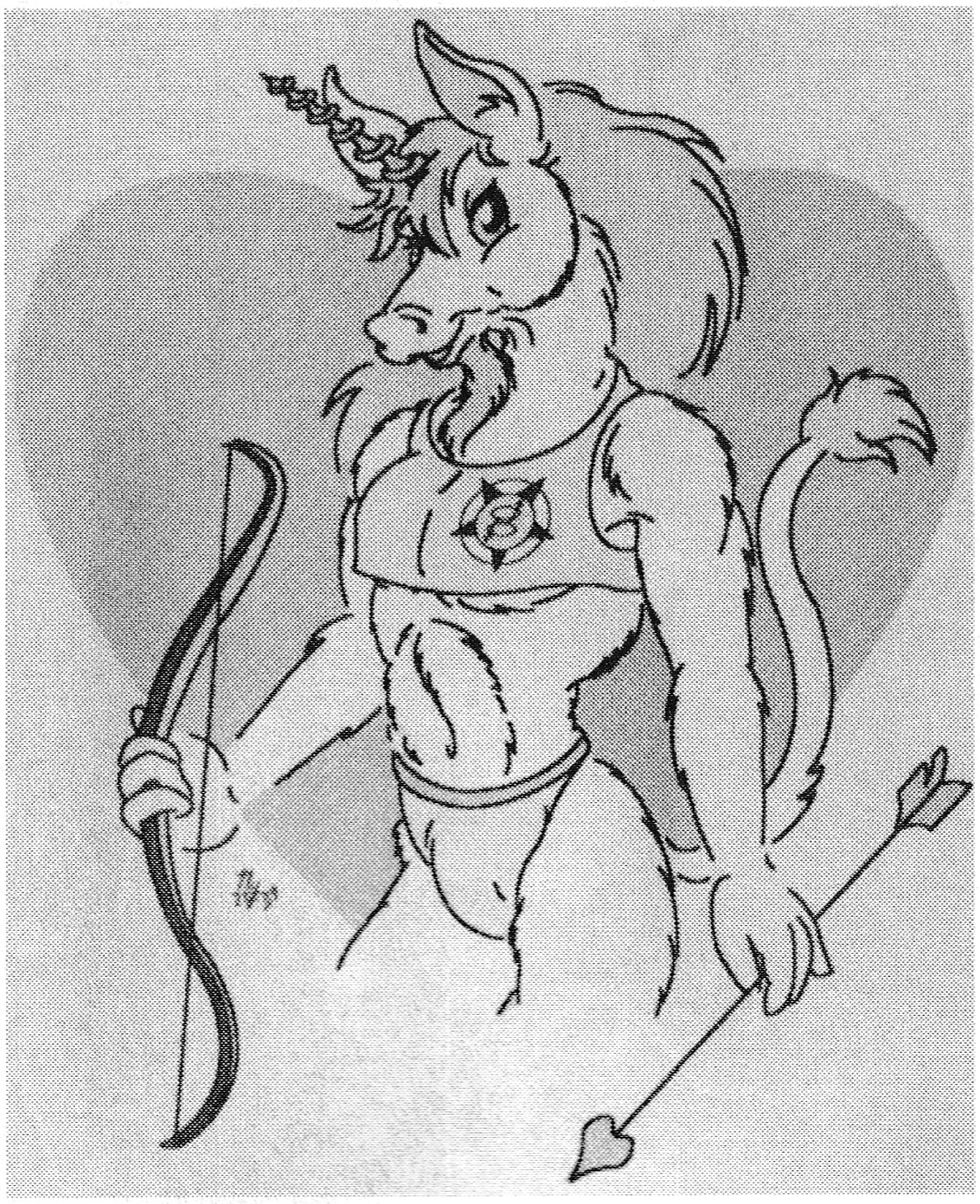
Commissioned Artwork

Mr. Ny is currently accepting contracts and commissions. The price will vary depending on the complexity and medium of the request.

Mr. Ny reserves the right to refuse any commission for any reason.

Mr. Joseph D. Ny
A. Fox Enterprises
11037 Henning Drive
Chardon, OH 44024

Internet: drcoyote@wariat.org



METRo
SMoK
LENIN STR as FUN
"Zsa Zsa"
Copyright © 1994 Joseph D. Ely
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"Sofia"

"Robin"

Copyright © 1994 Joseph D. Ny
All Rights Reserved

"Anastasia"

Copyright © 1993 Joseph D. Ny
All Rights Reserved

УТО ТЫ СЕЛАЛ АЛЯ ФРОНТА?

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All Rights Reserved

Ronald Van Bokhoven

Background

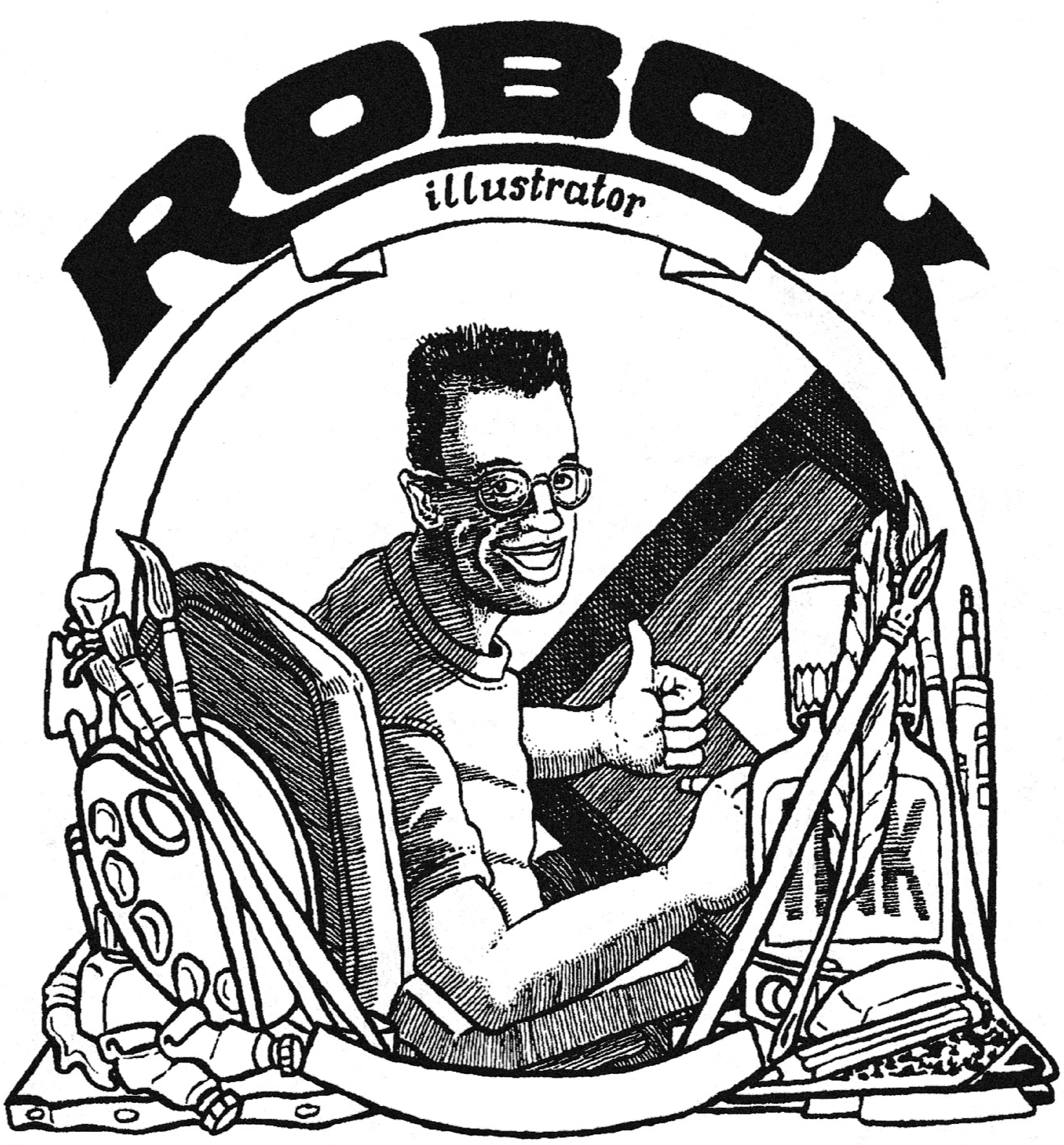
A 30-year-old professional Illustrator, Ronald originally began work for the US Department of Foreign Affairs. He has experience with working for numerous companies, from greeting card designs to illustrations for the Dutch Teddy Bear Collectors Magazine. His artwork ranges from Sci-Fi to Americana, Victorian, Old-Fashioned/Storybook Illustration and Funny Animals. By all accounts, a very talented and welcome addition to the International freelance market.

Commissioned Artwork

Mr. Bokhoven is accepting contracts and commissions. Price will vary depending on the complexity of the request.

Mr. Ronald Van Bokhoven
Hooghout 116
4817 EE Breda
The Netherlands

Phone: 011-31-76-218061



ROBOK

ROBOK

ROBOK

ROBOK

SWEET and TENDER
ROBOK

Joshua Kennedy

Background

A junior at Virginia Commonwealth University, Joshua is currently studying Communication Art & Design with an emphasis on electronic media. When he graduates, he hopes to work as a comic book artist or animator. He began drawing as a serious pursuit in 1991, and now does it to the exclusion of all else. His artwork gives his characters excellent expression and emotion. Joshua will no doubt do well in the field of illustration.

Commissioned Artwork

Mr. Kennedy is currently accepting commissions. His execution time will vary depending on his workload/classload.

Mr. Kennedy reserves the right to reject any commission offer based on content or concerning characters whose copyrights are owned by others.

Mr. Joshua Kennedy
Post Office Box 831
Keysville, VA 23947

LOOK! THE LETTER FINALLY CAME! OH BOY OBOY!

ILEY 1994

FROZEN PRESS

MAYBE THEY SENT A CHECK IN ADVANCE!

RIP!

DEAR JILLIAN: WE CAN'T USE YOUR STORY.

ALL IS LOST!

BUT TAKE HEART! THROUGH OUR SUBMITTER'S RELOCATION PROGRAM YOU CAN HAVE A NEW LIFE! YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR NAME, MOVE TO A NEW TOWN..

AND SUBMIT AGAIN!

NYEH HEH HEH HEH HEH HEH

WHAT THE HECK IS IT?

A MICRON° PIGMA™

JOHN HOWL, THE COYOTE AT *FROZEN PRESS*, RECOMMENDED IT.

hi John!

HERE.. LET ME INK YOU WITH IT.

IS THIS GOING TO HURT?

ALMOST DONE.. HOW DID IT FEEL?

OKAY...

© Tate 1994

IT'S KINDA TICKLY.

IT'S SOFTER AND SMOOTHER THAN THOSE AWFUL QUILL PENS..

BUT NOT <u>NEARLY</u> AS NICE AS YOUR **BRUSH**

KNOCK KNOCK

'ello?

HI! I'M HERE TO SEE MR. JW KENNEDY?

REALLY? OH DEAR, I'M AFRAID YOU CAN'T. YOU SEE...

MY HUSBAND IS DEAD.

YES. 'E'S BEEN QUITE DEAD FOR SOME TIME NOW..

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

UH.. I'M ANSWERING AN AD..

ARTIST'S MODEL WANTED?

THIS AD IS ALMOST FIVE MONTHS OLD.

OH.

I'm SORRY..

THE ARTIST AND THE JOB OFFER HAVE EXPIRED.

GOODBYE

..WAIT!

I DON'T HAVE ANYWHERE TO GO! I LOST my JOB AND GOT EVICTED FROM my APARTMENT TODAY! I'LL WASH DISHES! MOP FLOORS! CLEAN TOILETS! ANYTHING! LET ME IN PLEEZZ!

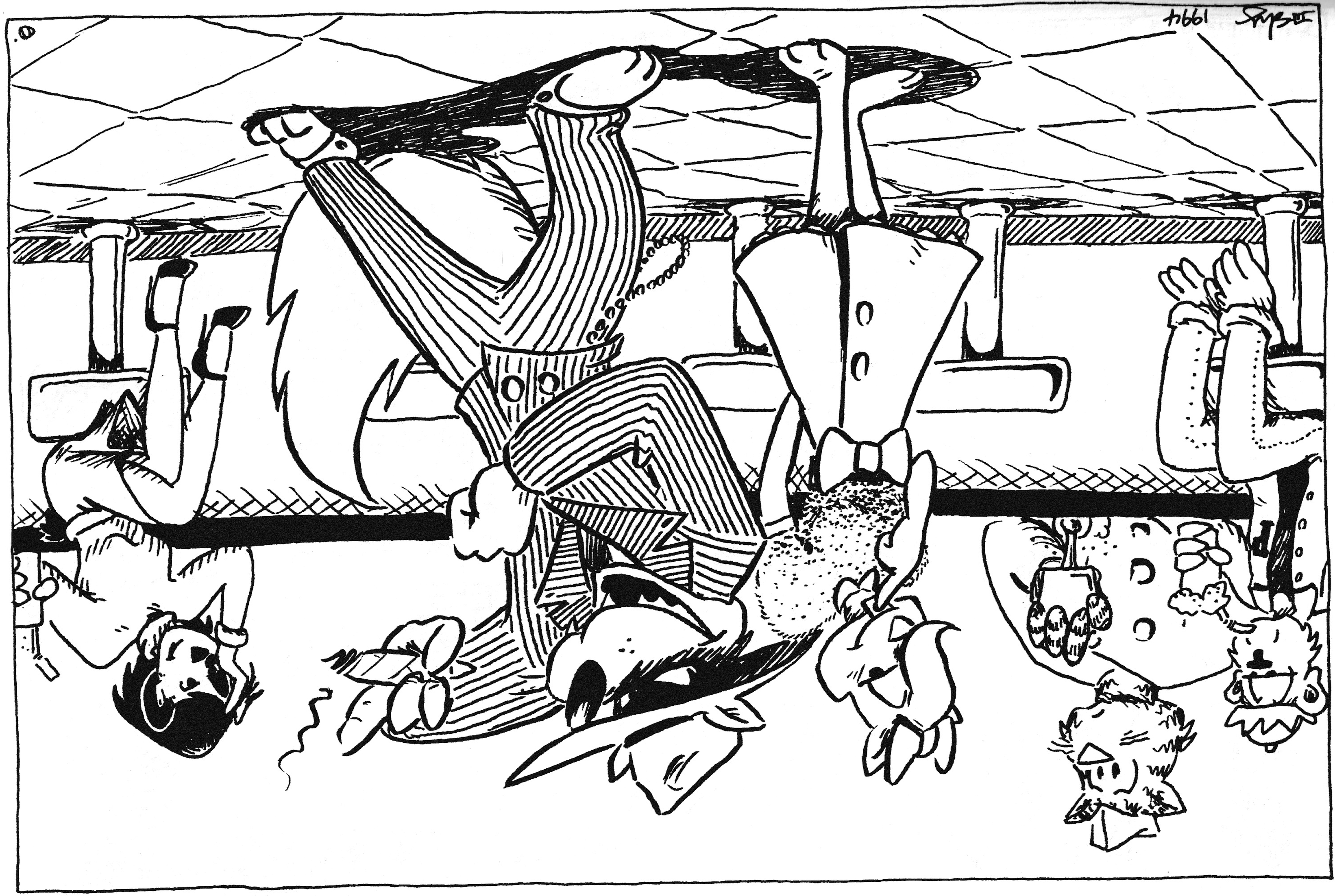
WHAT'LL I DO, MISS? SHE'S GOT 'ER BLOOMIN 'AND IN THE DOOR!

PLEASE!

OW!

WELL, FER CRYIN' OUT LOUD...

GRUMP


1991

Genesis Eve Cook

Background

Genesis's artwork is quite unique and recognizable. Her characters usually exude a sense of happiness, of merry celebration. Her use of strong external lines draws the eye along certain paths, conveying movement and expression. It also usually reduces quite well, with little or no distortion. She has a large number of prints and portfolios available for sale.

A prolific and voyaging artist, she can be found at conventions across the country.

Commissioned Artwork

Ms. Cook is currently accepting contracts and commissions. Her prices are:

Pencil sketch, No Background	$5
Additional Character	$2
Pencil sketch, Full Background (Pencils are Carmine Red)	$7
B&W Inked, No Background	$10
Additional Character	$2
B&W Inked, Full Background	$15
Additional Character	$3
Color, No Background (Your choice of medium)	$20
Color, Full Background	$25
Additional Character	$3
Animation cels (on acetate)	$40
Matting and Backing of a piece	$6
Transfer of Publishing Rights	$20
Sculpture	Call

Ms. Genesis Eve Cook
8008 NE 8th Terrace #241
Oklahoma City, OK 73127

Internet: gen@netcom.com

Aember & Aento
©Genesis '94

Scott watson, Doc Firefly, Professor Urso Morarity,
and Cody McGregor © Genesis '94
(Toupee the rat too!)

© Genesis '94

©Genesis '94

©Genesis '94

Taral Wayne

Background

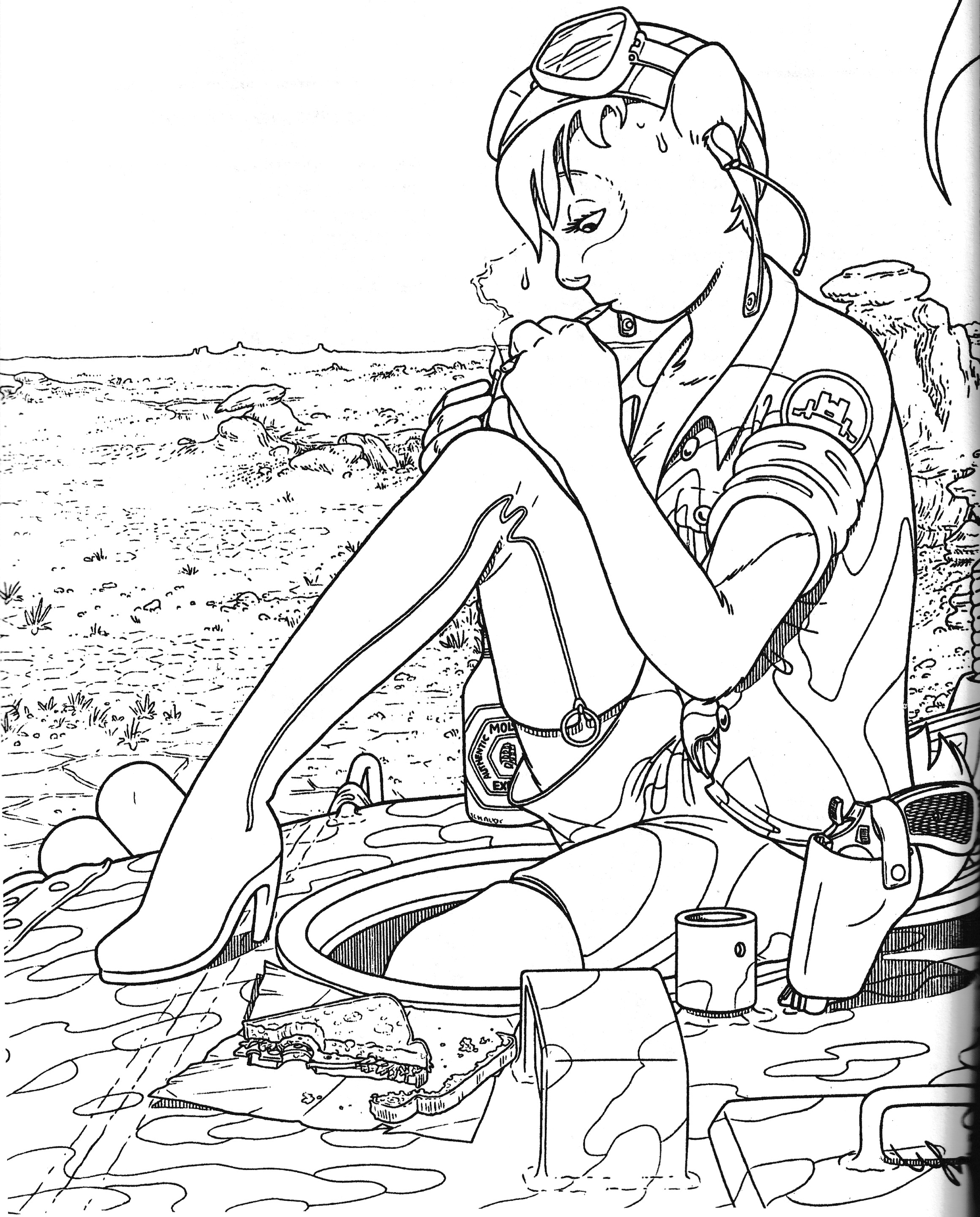
Taral Wayne emerged onto the art scene as a popular fan artist in the mid 1980's, although he had been drawing for quite some time before that. Mr. Wayne is currently finishing drawing and inking of the story of Beatrix Farmer, a character invented by Steve Gallacci, author/artist of Albedo. It will be published by Mu Press, and looks to be spectacular! Mr. Wayne attends many conventions across the country each year, including PhilCon, Confurence and the San Diego ComiCon.

Commissioned Artwork

Mr. Wayne is currently accepting commissions. His rates will vary according to the type, complexity and level of detail in the artwork requested.

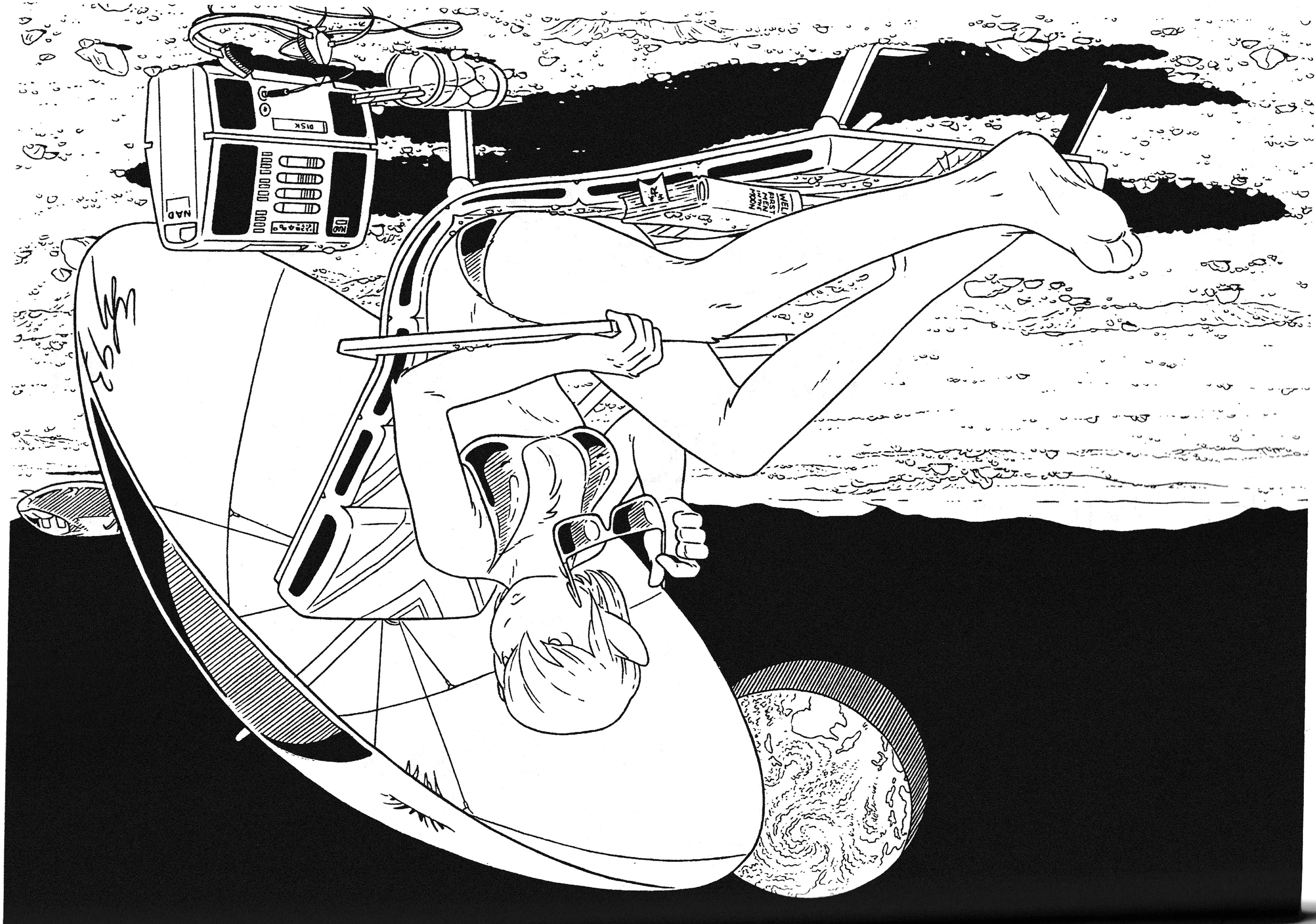
Mr. Wayne may be directly contacted at:

Mr. Taral Wayne
245 Dunn Avenue #2111
Toronto, Ontario
Canada M6K 1S6



STAR·HAUL
NATTY BUMPPO
WILLOW RUN, AL
401
KENNETH FLETCHER
CAPT'N
DANGER
WARNING
ADHESIVE
LIQUIDS
SYRUP

XMAS
SCALE 1:32
CHAPARRAL 2
SONI
HOME COLOUR IMAGER
Home Imager
FULL-COLOUR
CD AUDIO-VISU
TAHYO
HEART of DIXIE
RC
Me 410
Hornet
1/24 Scale Flying Model
KOX
Roller Blades
CMM


DISK
NAD
WEL
FIRST MEN ON THE MOON

SOAP!
91A

Timothy Fay

Background

Timothy Fay began cartooning after a plane crash that left him stranded in the Tibetan Himalayas. He was rescued by an enigmatic monastic sect and instructed in the mysterious ways of the *Vootie* by Funny Animal High Masters Ken Fletcher and Reed Waller. Upon returning to civilization he has dedicated himself to furthering the cause of Funny Animal Liberation and other forms of cartoon enlightenment.

Commissioned Artwork

Mr. Fay is currently not accepting general commissions due to a heavy workload. However, he can be contacted at the following address:

Mr. Timothy Fay
725 Kimball Street NE
Fridley, MN 55432-1603

FLIGHT

BY TIMOTHY FAY

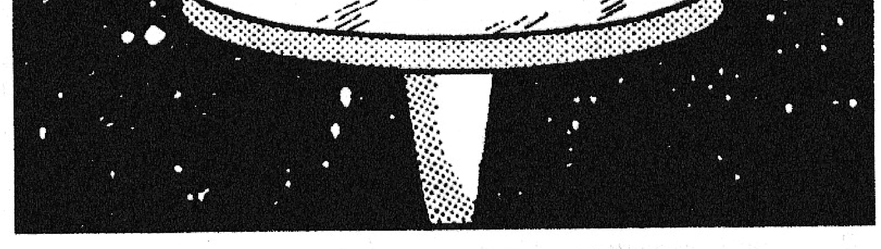
HE STANDS ALONE, POISED ON THE EDGE OF ***FLIGHT...***

HE IS THE PRODUCT OF AN ADVANCED MEDICAL EXPERIMENT THAT HAS LEFT HIM ***CHANGED...***

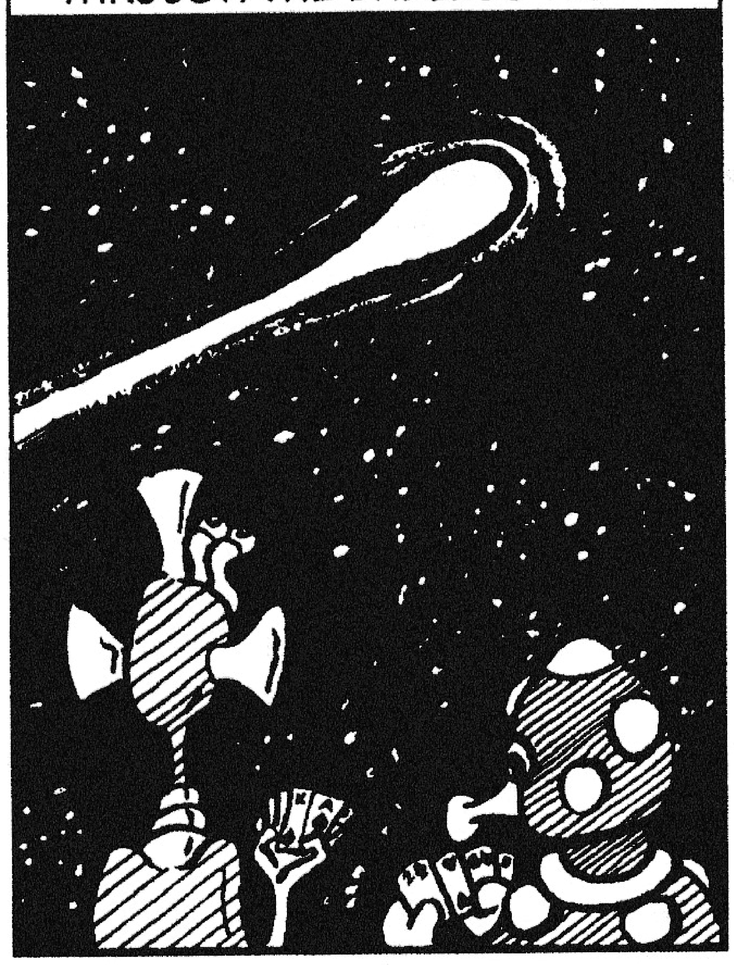
TRANSFORMED...

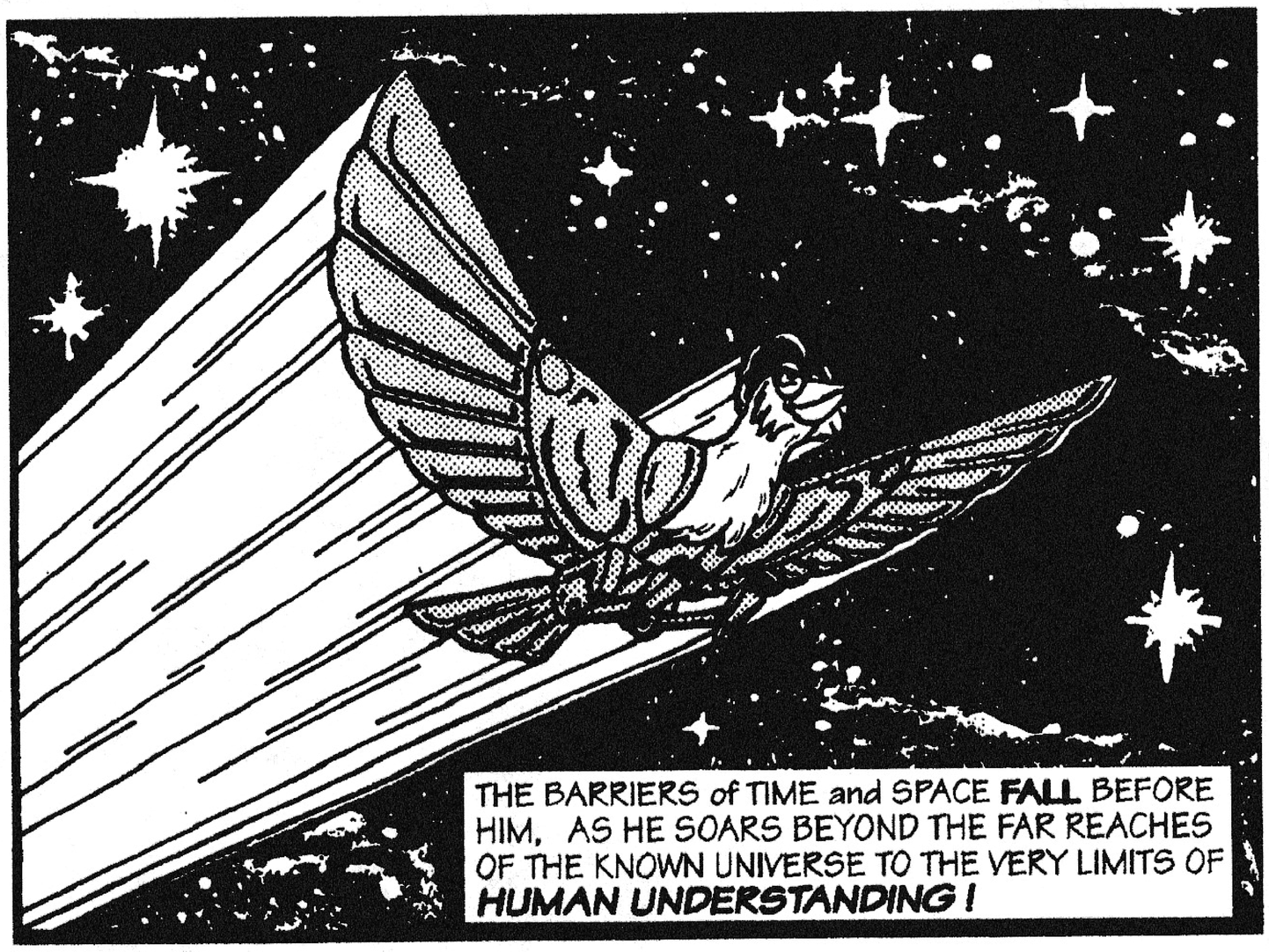
THOUGH COMPLEX ELECTRONICS PULSE THROUGH HIS METAL BODY, THEY CANNOT MASK THE BEATING OF A ***LIVING HEART!***

CARRIED ALOFT ON ***SILVER WINGS...***



...HE SOARS, ***COMET-LIKE,*** THROUGH THE ENDLESS NIGHT.





THE BARRIERS of TIME and SPACE **FALL** BEFORE HIM, AS HE SOARS BEYOND THE FAR REACHES OF THE KNOWN UNIVERSE TO THE VERY LIMITS OF ***HUMAN UNDERSTANDING!***

TRANSCENDING THE LAST BOUNDARIES OF **REALITY,** WHERE THERE ARE NO LIMITATIONS UPON THIS ***SHINING APOTHEOSIS--***

--THIS ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF ***BEAUTY*** and ***FLIGHT--***

SKOON!

ASTEROIDS, HOWEVER, TEND TO BE A PROBLEM...

I'LL BET THIS NEVER HAPPENED TO **JONATHAN LIVINGSTON SEAGULL!**

©TIMOTHY FAY '88

A Work in Progress...

THE RAIN, THE PARK, AND OTHER THINGS

A '60's Fantasy in 3 Short Acts
by Timothy Fay

Words & Music by: Kornfeld & Duboff **Originally Performed by: The Cowsills**

She could make me happy.

Flowers in her hair...

Flowers everywhere!

Flowers everywhere!

I love the flower girl.

Oh I don't know just why--

She simply caught my eye.

I knew I had to say hello.

HELLO.

HELLO.

She smiled up at me.

To Be Continued...

SKUNK IS THE BEST!

© Timothy Fay 1992

Timothy Fay
© 1994

Michelle Parker

Background

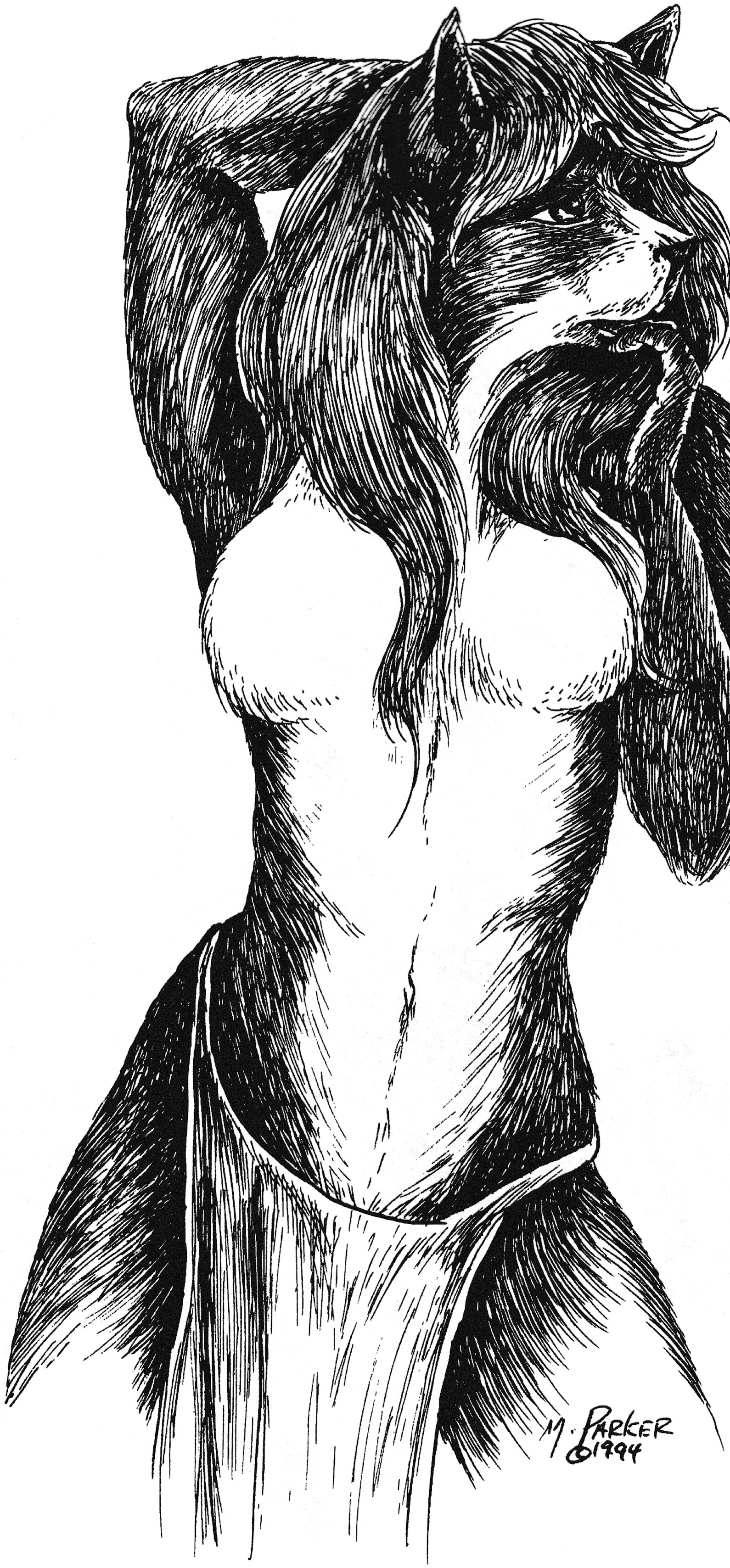
A relative newcomer to anthropomorphic art, Michelle balances her time between her art and art school. While technical pen is her favorite medium, she is well versed in the use of many other media. She works in many different styles, although Art Nouveau has been a major influence. She is capable of rendering very realistic fur textures, as can be seen in the second piece in her section.

Commissioned Artwork

Ms. Parker is currently accepting contracts and commissions of 11x14" and under in size. The price will vary depending on the complexity and medium of the request, as will the execution time.

Ms. Michelle Parker
5115 Stillbrooke
Houston, TX 77035

XII
©1993


M. PARKER
©1994

M PARKER © 1994

Kjartan Arnorsson

Background

Born in 1965, Kjartan attended schools all over Europe as his family moved to follow his father's career. He came to the USA in 1984 to study at the Art Institute of Boston. He transferred to Northeastern University and graduated in 1989. Kjartan does all sorts of illustration, from storyboarding for television networks, advertisement, small press publications and comic books. He will be coming out with a nationally distributed comic book soon, based material from his popular "Savage Funnies" series of cartoons.

The piece featured in the following pages represents the beginning of the saga of Herman Orca, a freedom fighter in a bleak world of oppression, political intrigue and literal dog-eat-rat conflict. He advises that the first chapter is a trifle wordy due to having to establish a whole world in a few pages, but it picks up dramatically as the story progresses.

It originally sprang to life when the "demon of realism" whispered to him, saying "if all the animals in this world are sentient, what do the carnivores eat?" The first chapter turned into a continuing series that shows no sign of ending soon.

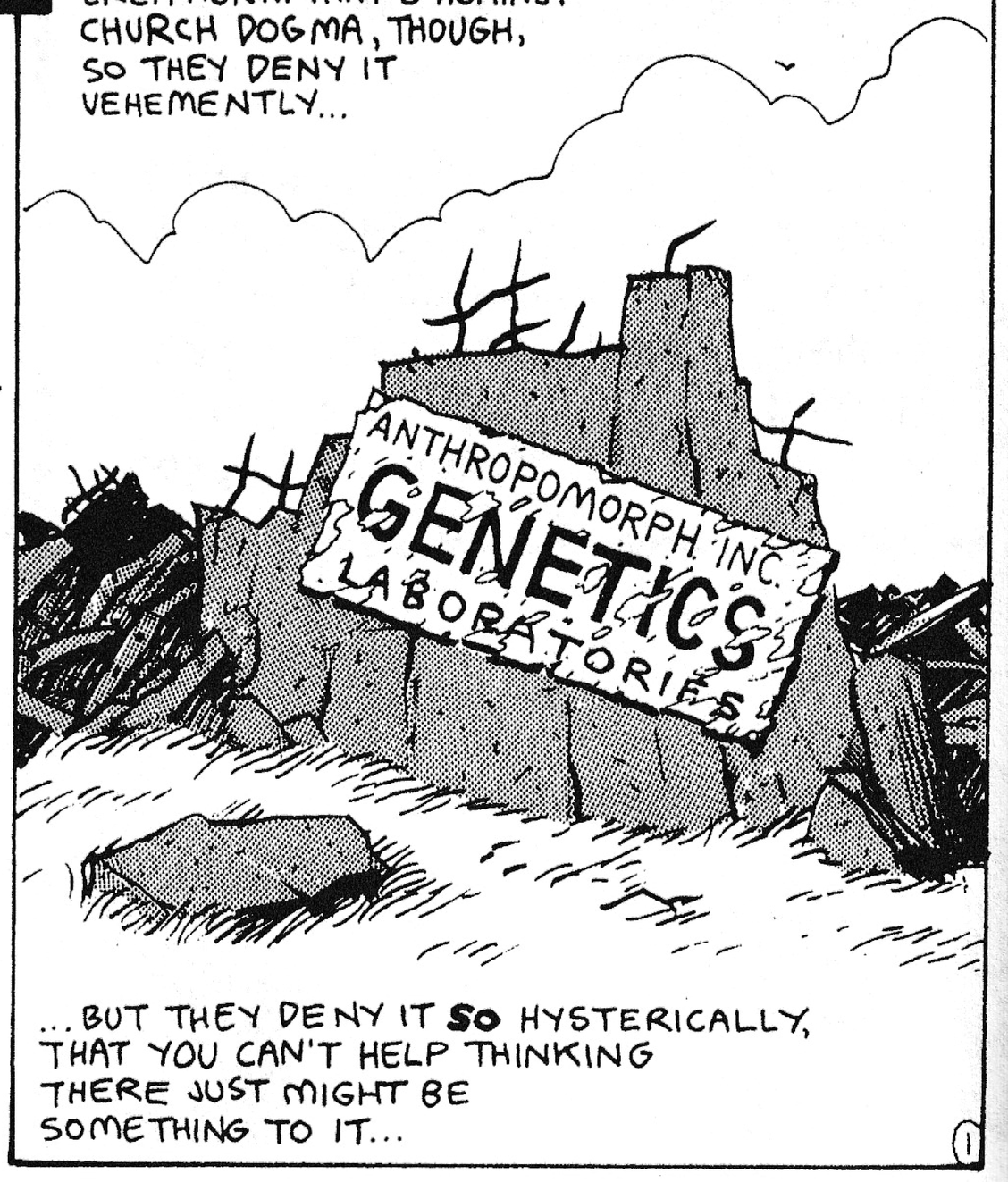
Commissioned Artwork

Mr. Arnorsson is currently accepting contracts and commissions. The price will vary depending on the complexity and medium of the request. He has asked that the company forward all mail to him.

Mr. Kjartan Arnorsson, Artist
Med Systems Company
Post Office Box 580009
Flushing, NY 11358

OPEN SEASON

BEGINNING THE STORIES OF **HERMAN ORCA** - WRITTEN AND DRAWN BY **KJARTAN ARNÓRSSON** © '94



ANYHOW - HERBIVORES TOOK CONTROL OF THE PLANTS THEY ATE, AND BECAME FARMERS.

YUM!

THE CARNIVORES, IN TURN, TOOK CONTROL OF THE FARMERS.

YUM!

For a long time, we had a feudal system with carnivore barons and herbivore peasants. It was a tough system, but it gave birth to our modern civilization... Herbivores invented books and culture, carnivores guns and war...

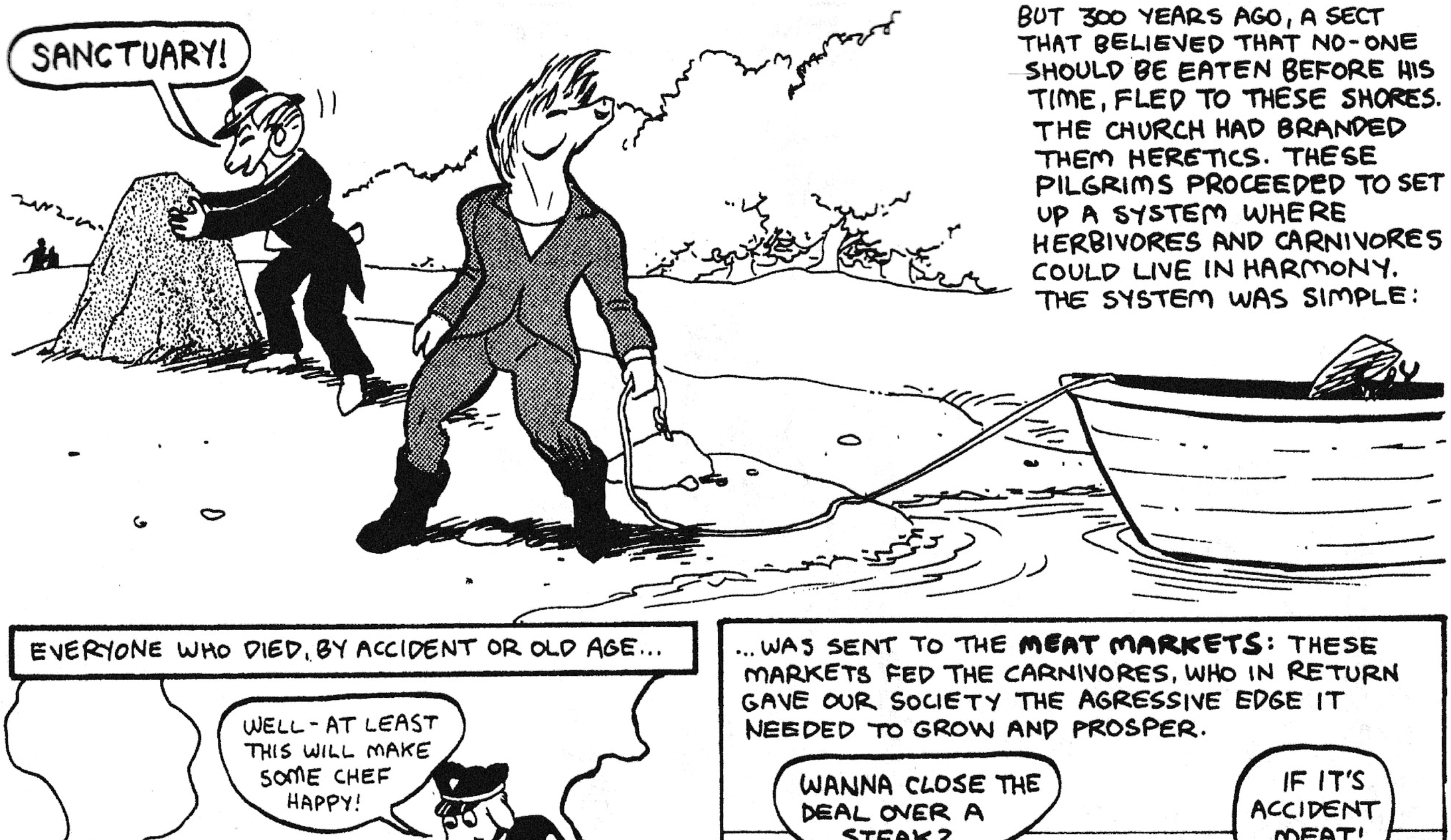
- with some exceptions on each side...

TWICE A YEAR, THE BARONS WOULD STOCK THEIR LARDERS WITH WHOMEVER WAS UNLUCKY ENOUGH TO BE CAUGHT OUT IN THE OPEN DURING **OPEN SEASON.**

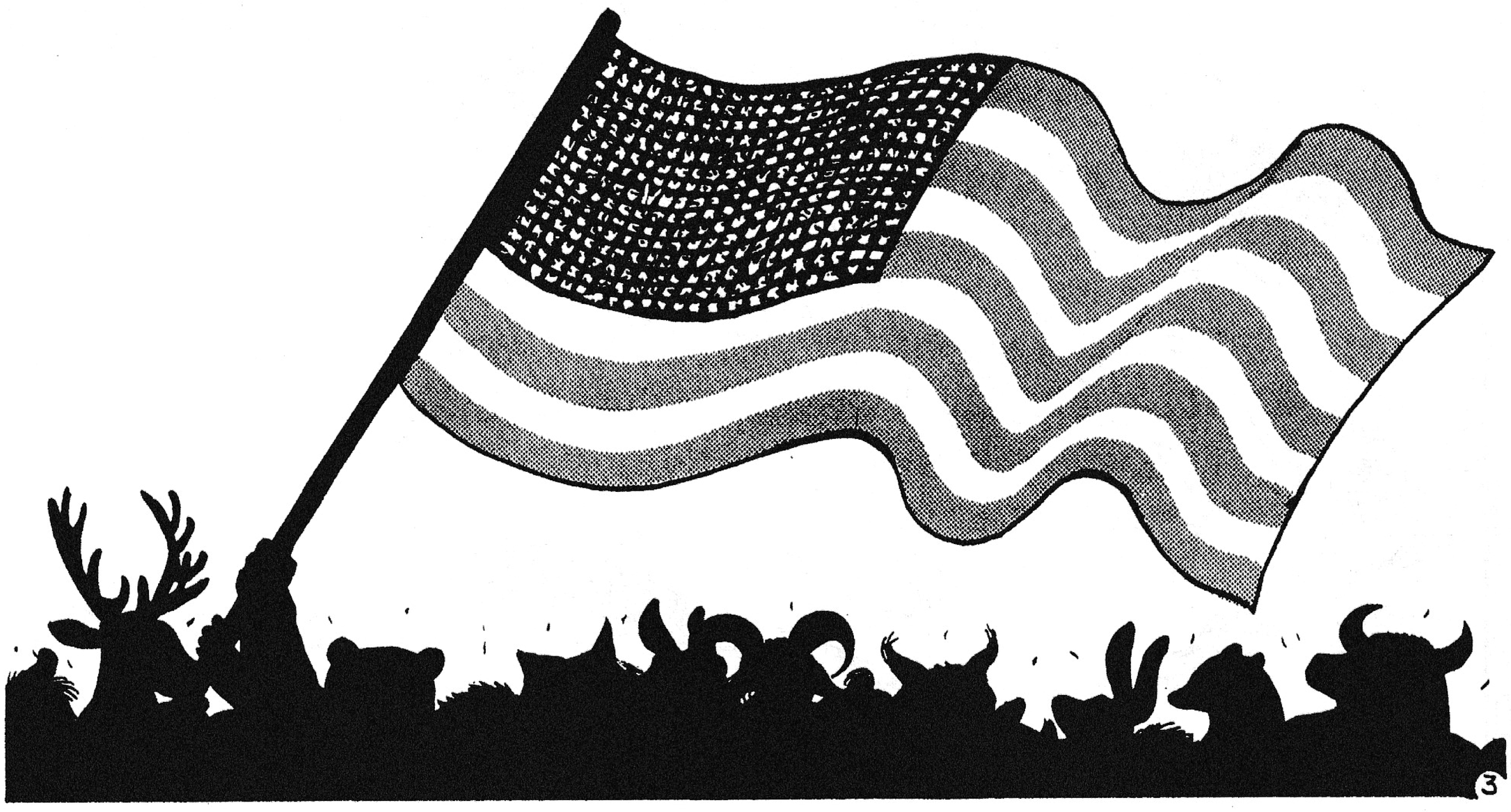
FASTER!

BAWK!

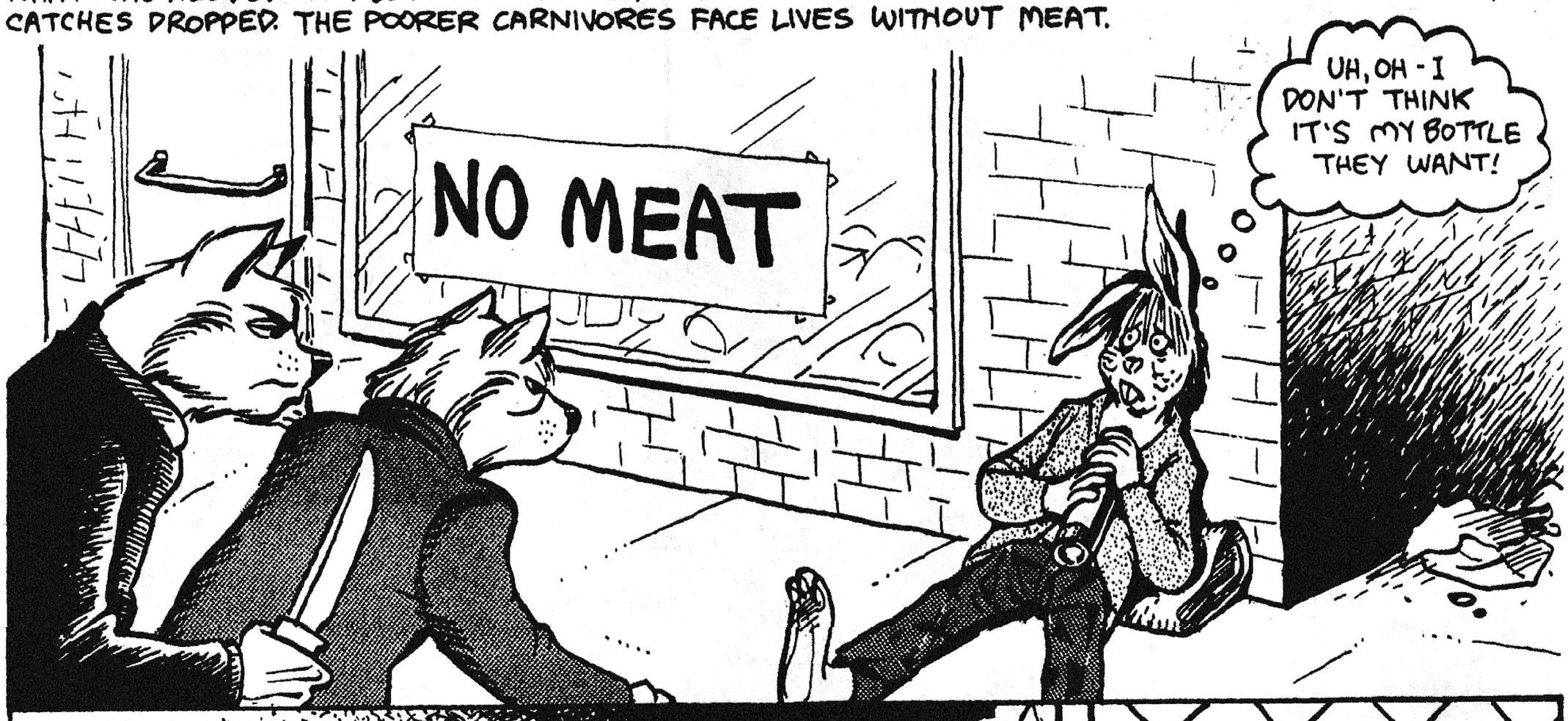
I GUESS IT HELPED WEED OUT THE STUPID.

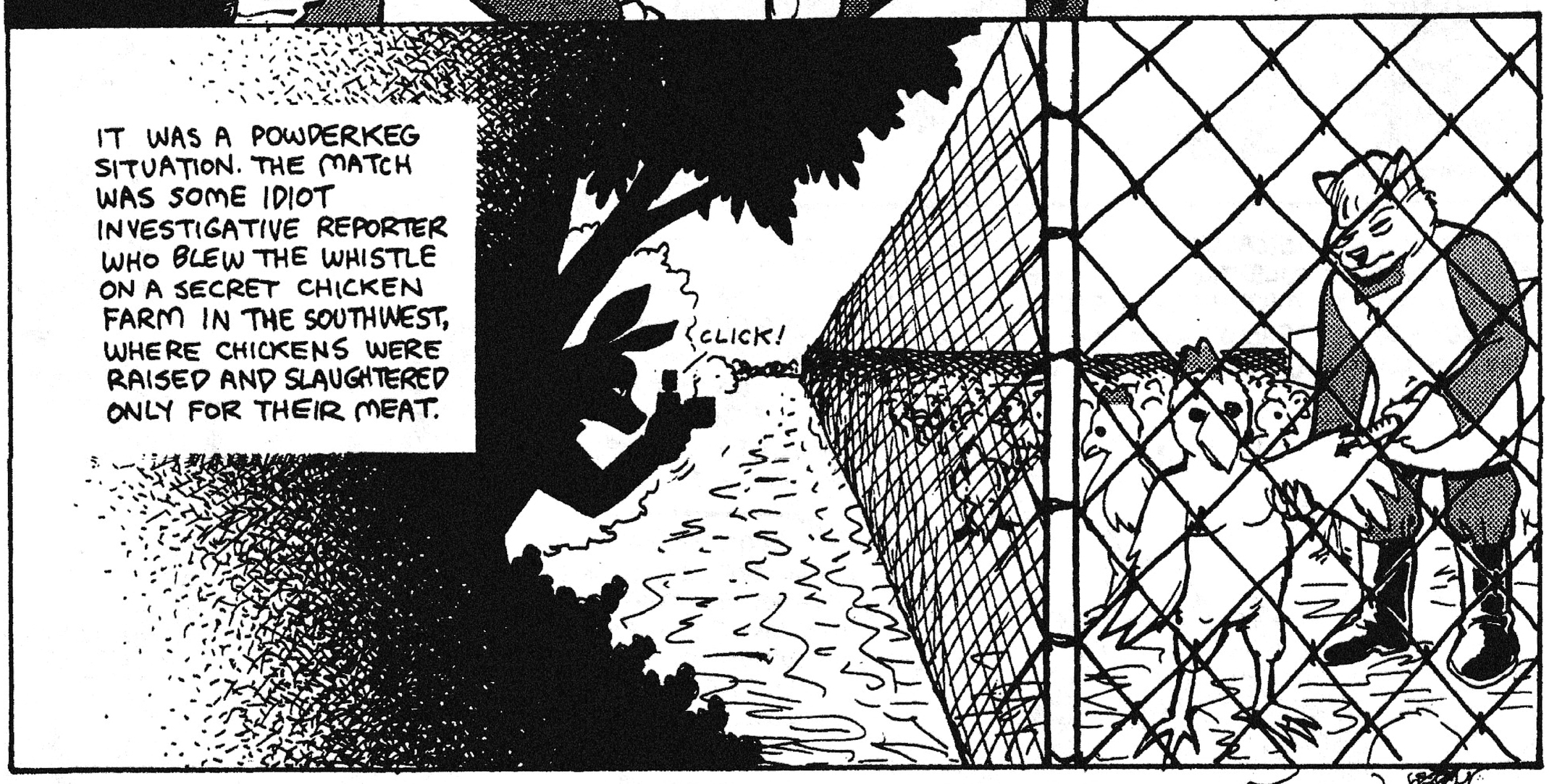


IT WORKED FOR QUITE AWHILE. NO ONE WAS (OPENLY) KILLED FOR THEIR MEAT - EVERYBODY WAS HAPPY. YEARNING TO BE FREE OF THE BARBARIC OPEN SEASON, IMMIGRANTS FLOCKED TO OUR SHORES. THE UNITED SPECIES OF AMERICA (WHERE THAT NAME CAME FROM, NOBODY KNOWS.) GREW INTO THE MOST POWERFUL NATION ON EARTH. THE MEAT MARKET SYSTEM BECAME A MODEL FOR THE WORLD.

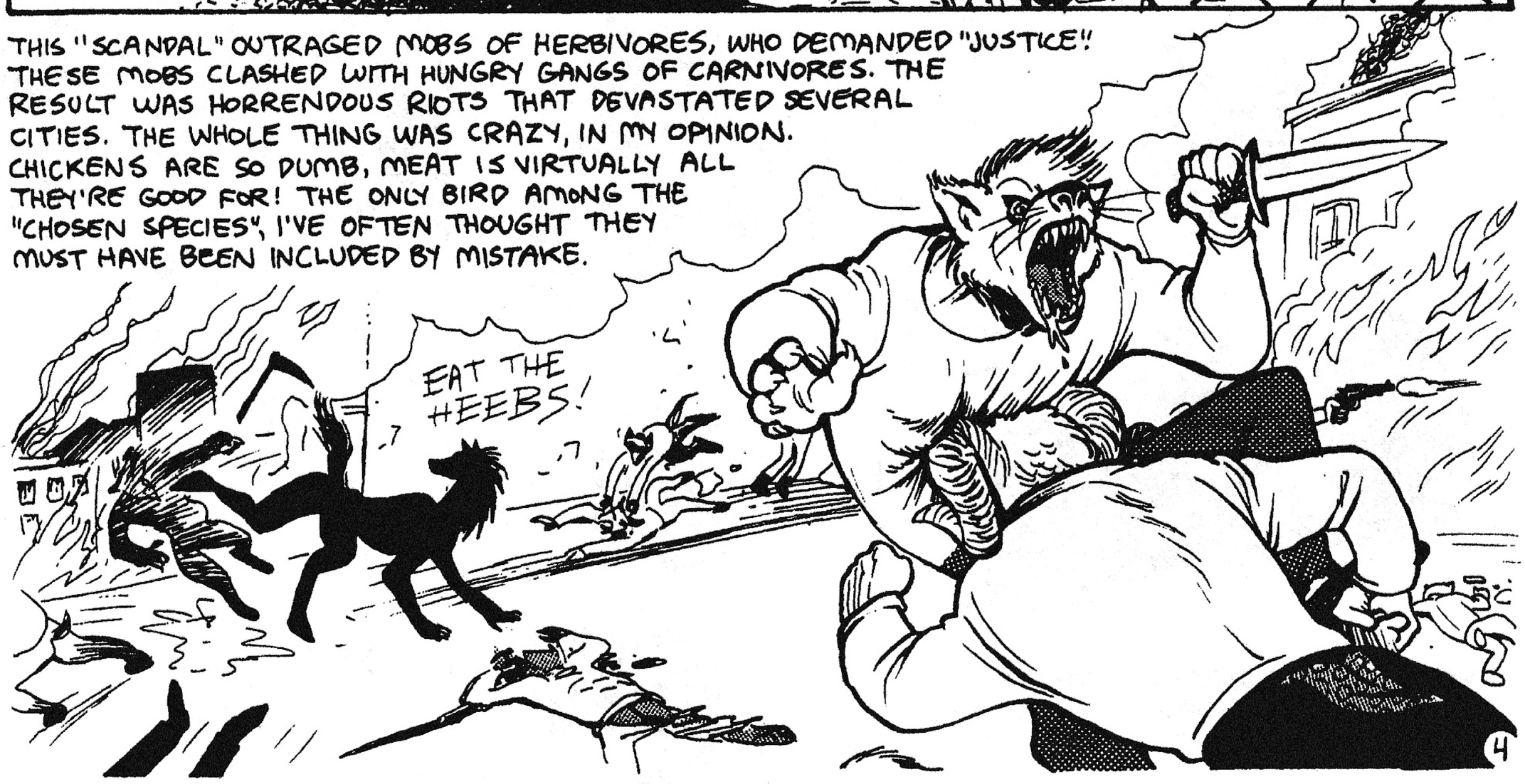


BUT THE SYSTEM CARRIED THE SEEDS OF IT'S OWN DOOM - IRONICALLY, THROUGH THE VERY PEACE AND PROGRESS IT CREATED! MEDICAL PROGRESS AND GENERAL PROSPERITY DROPPED THE DEATH RATE BELOW WHAT WAS NEEDED TO FEED THE CARNIVORE POPULATION. FISH SEEMED TO BE GETTING SMARTER, TOO - CATCHES DROPPED. THE POORER CARNIVORES FACE LIVES WITHOUT MEAT.





THIS "SCANDAL" OUTRAGED MOBS OF HERBIVORES, WHO DEMANDED "JUSTICE!" THESE MOBS CLASHED WITH HUNGRY GANGS OF CARNIVORES. THE RESULT WAS HORRENDOUS RIOTS THAT DEVASTATED SEVERAL CITIES. THE WHOLE THING WAS CRAZY, IN MY OPINION. CHICKENS ARE SO DUMB, MEAT IS VIRTUALLY ALL THEY'RE GOOD FOR! THE ONLY BIRD AMONG THE "CHOSEN SPECIES", I'VE OFTEN THOUGHT THEY MUST HAVE BEEN INCLUDED BY MISTAKE.



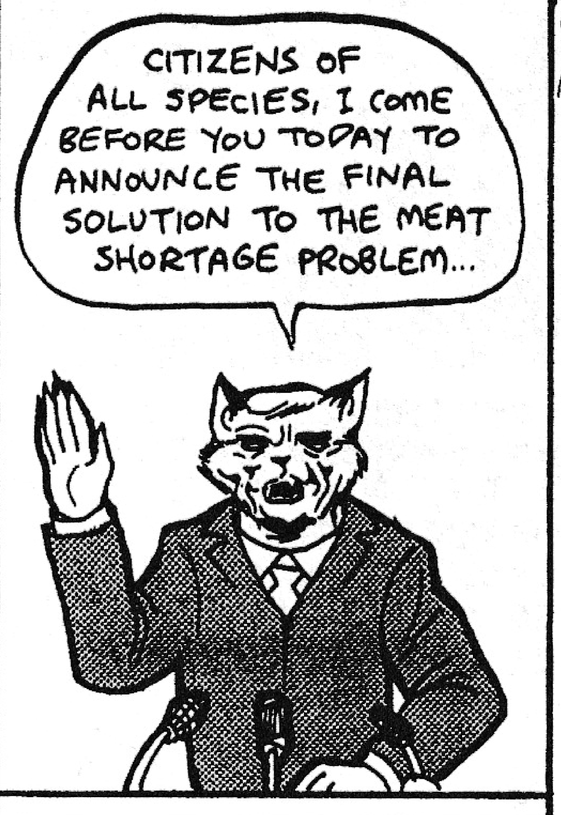
THE RIOTS CONTINUED. RADICAL HERBIVORES WERE CLAIMING THAT THERE WAS NO LONGER ANY NEED FOR CARNIVORES AT ALL. THE CARNIVORES HAD MOST OF THE GUNS, BUT WERE MASSIVELY OUTNUMBERED BY THE HERBIVORES.

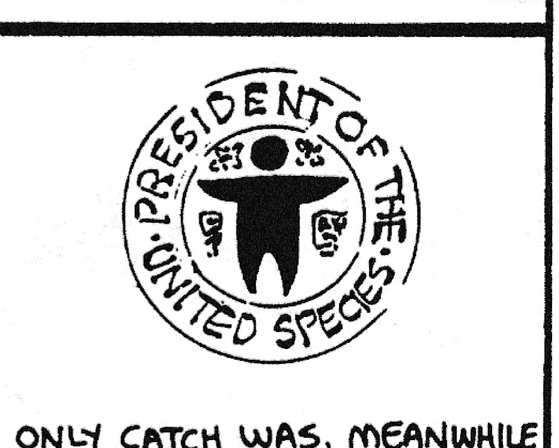
THERE WERE BASICALLY ONLY TWO POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS: REDUCE THE CARNIVORE CORE POPULATION TO MATCH THE NATURAL MEAT SUPPLY - OR SOMEHOW INCREASE THE MEAT SUPPLY **WITHOUT** SETTING OFF MORE RIOTS.

SINCE THE GOVERNMENT CONSISTED MOSTLY OF CARNIVORES, THEY WERE NATURALLY RELUCTANT TO VOTE TO CULL THEMSELVES.

THE GOVERNMENT HAD NEVER FACED SUCH A CRISIS. THE SYSTEM THAT HAD BROUGHT 300 YEARS OF PROGRESS AND PROSPERITY WAS DISINTEGRATING. THE NATION LOOKED SET TO TEAR ITSELF APART IN A BLOODY CIVIL WAR.

SO THEY COMROMISED: THEY PROMISED A STRICT PROGRAM OF CARNIVORE BIRTH CONTROL, THAT WOULD EVENTUALLY REDUCE THE CARNIVORE POPULATION TO MATCH THE FOOD SUPPLY.

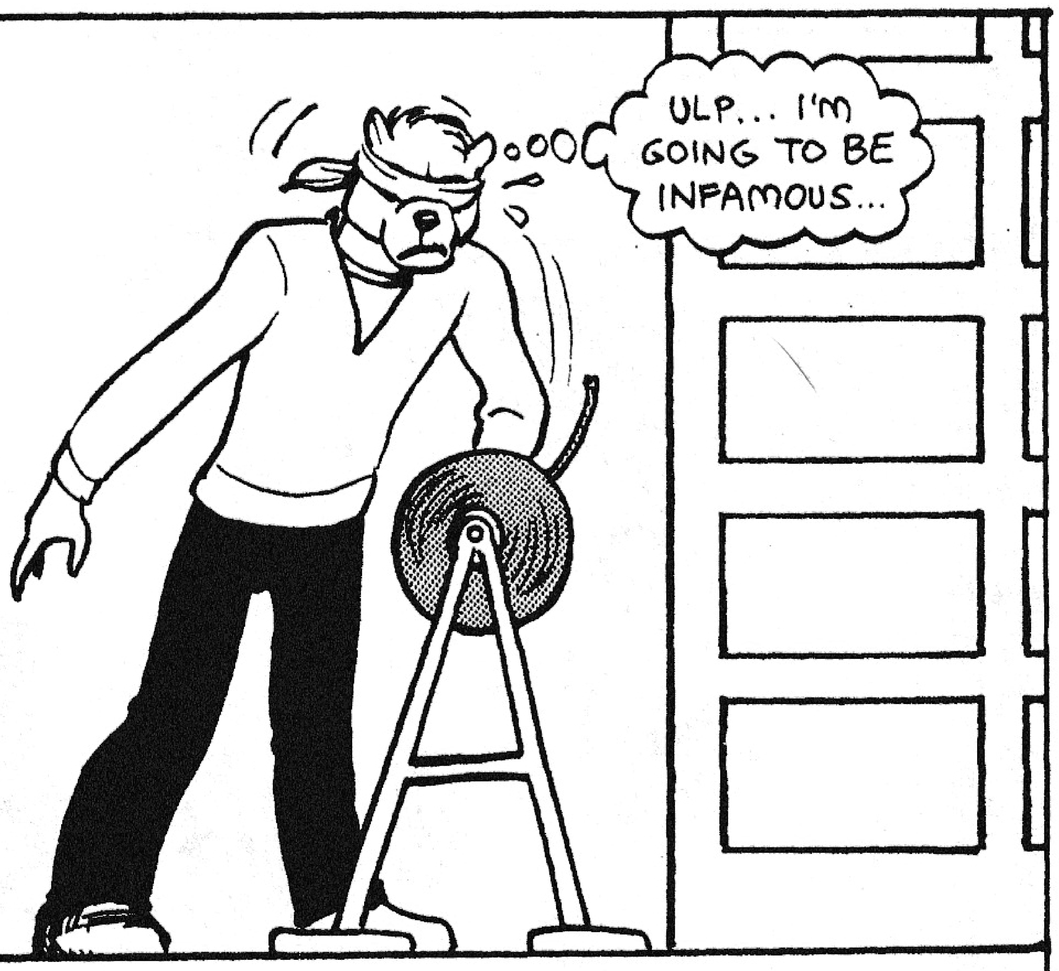




ONLY CATCH WAS, MEANWHILE A STEADY MEAT SUPPLY WOULD HAVE TO BE FOUND FOR ALL THE CARNIVORES ALREADY BORN.

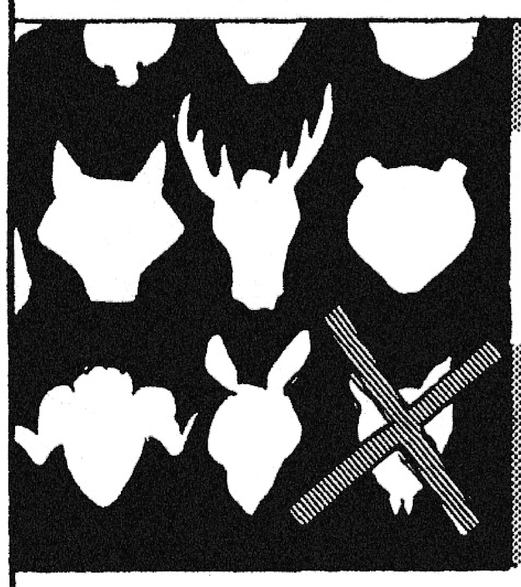
RESEARCH INTO MEAT SUBSTITUTES WASN'T FAR ENOUGH ALONG TO BET ON IT - AND MAINLY, THE FAT CATS WANTED REAL MEAT ON THEIR DINNER TABLES. SO THE GOVERNMENT CAME UP WITH THE **DEATH LOTTERY**: ONE SPECIES WOULD BE CHOSEN AT RANDOM, AND ROUNDED UP FOR MEAT FARMS. THESE FARMS WOULD FEED THE SURPLUS CARNIVORES UNTIL THE BIRTH CONTROL TOOK EFFECT. THE UNITED SPECIES OF AMERICA WOULD HAVE ONE LESS SPECIES.

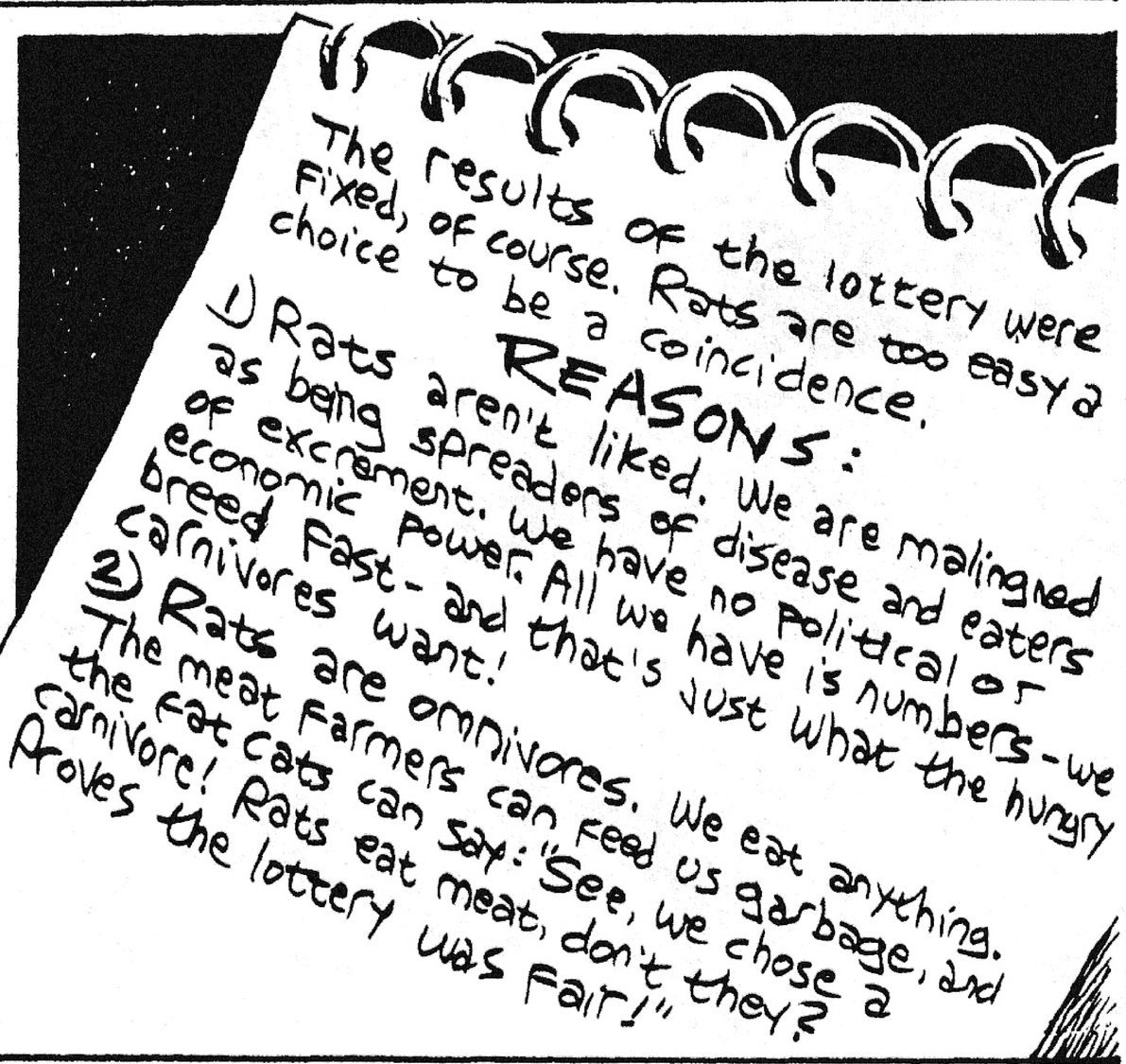
A SMALL PRICE TO PAY FOR THE SURVIVAL OF THE ENTIRE NATION, YES?



THEY PUT ALL THE SPECIES NAMES IN A DRUM, AND SPUN IT...

US RATS "WON" THE LOTTERY, AND WERE PROMPTLY DECLARED A NON-SPECIES.





THEY'D HAVE PICKED THE CHICKENS, EXCEPT THAT WOULD HAVE MADE THE FIX TOO OBVIOUS. BESIDES, LIKE MOST IDIOTS, CHICKENS ARE WELL LIKED. BUT NOBODY WILL LIFT A FINGER TO HELP A RAT! THE FAT CATS CAN EAT US WITH IMPUNITY. NOT THAT I MIND BEING EATEN AFTER I DIE A NATURAL DEATH. BUT I WON'T GET DOWN ON MY KNEES AND BE SHOT IN THE BACK OF THE HEAD, JUST SO SOME FAT CREEP'S HAMBURGER CAN TASTE JUICIER! OF COURSE, ALL THIS IS "ONLY TEMPORARY" UNTIL THE BIRTH CONTROL TAKES EFFECT. - OH, **SURE!** NOT EVEN THE **CHICKENS** ARE SWALLOWING **THAT** ONE!

6

RATS MUST FACE FACTS. THERE WILL BE NO HELP FROM ANYONE. WE MUST SAVE OURSELVES.

KNOCK KNOCK

THE CAMPS ARE BUILT. THEY'VE ALREADY STARTED TO ROUND US UP.

HERMAN ORCA, SPECIES RAT?

HERE.

SLAM!

BOOM! BOOM!

URRGHH UH

NOT DEAD YET?

CLICK

CLONK DUNK

SORRY...

...BUT THERE'S REALLY NO ROOM FOR COMPROMISE, IS THERE ?

WHOOM!

NICE PUMPGUN. DEFINITELY AN UPGRADE FROM MY OLD SAWED-OFF.

HM. THIS IS REAL, NOW. I'VE GOT TO MAKE A BASIC DECISION, HERE, AND I'VE GOT TO MAKE IT BEFORE THESE BOY'S BUDDIES SHOW UP.

7

DO I LOOK OUT FOR NUMBER ONE, OR DO I STICK MY NECK OUT FOR OTHERS? DO I SNEAK OUT THE BACK, OR DO I ATTEMPT TO LIBERATE THAT MEATWAGON DOWN THERE?

FENADAY MEAT DEPT.

WHAT WOULD A LIFE ON THE RUN BE WORTH, ANYWAY? SOONER OR LATER, I'D BE CAUGHT - AND DIE ALONE.

MIGHT AS WELL START FIGHTING BACK RIGHT HERE AND NOW.

THEY CAN'T **DO** THIS, I TELL YA, THEY JUST CAN'T **DO**

OH, SHUT UP. THEY CAN DO WHATEVER THEY **WANT**- THEY GOT THE **GUNS!**

BOOM! AUAGH!

THUD

BOOM CA-CHACK! YAAH! BOOM! POW POW!

CLICK CLACK CLICK SLACK

KA CHUNK!

EVERYBODY OUT FOR THE FREEDOM EXPRESS!

CLANG!

HERMAN!

SKINBOY!

MUST BE FATE! HERE, HELP ME GATHER UP THE GUARD'S GUNS

- THE REST OF YOU, SCATTER!

RIGHT!

THANKS, DUDE!

WHOO HOO! I CAN'T **BELIEVE** YA, HERM! I COULD ALREADY FEEL THE MUSTARD ON MY BACK, BUT **YOU** JUST BLEW 'EM ALL **AWAY!** JUST LIKE **THAT!** YOU ARE ONE

IT'S JUST THE START, SKIN. THIS MEAT CAMP IDEA IS **NOT** POPULAR. IT CAN ONLY WORK IF WE RATS **LET** OURSELVES BE COWED, **LET** OURSELVES BE ROUNDED UP WITHOUT A FIGHT! BUT WE **CAN** FIGHT! WE CAN BREAK THIS WHOLE SCHEME!!

UH.... JUST THE **TWO** OF US?

OH NO, NOT JUST US. I THINK IT'S HIGH TIME WE GOT THE OLD **GANG** TOGETHER, HMM?

NEXT: MEDIA WAR! 9

Bill Fitts

Background

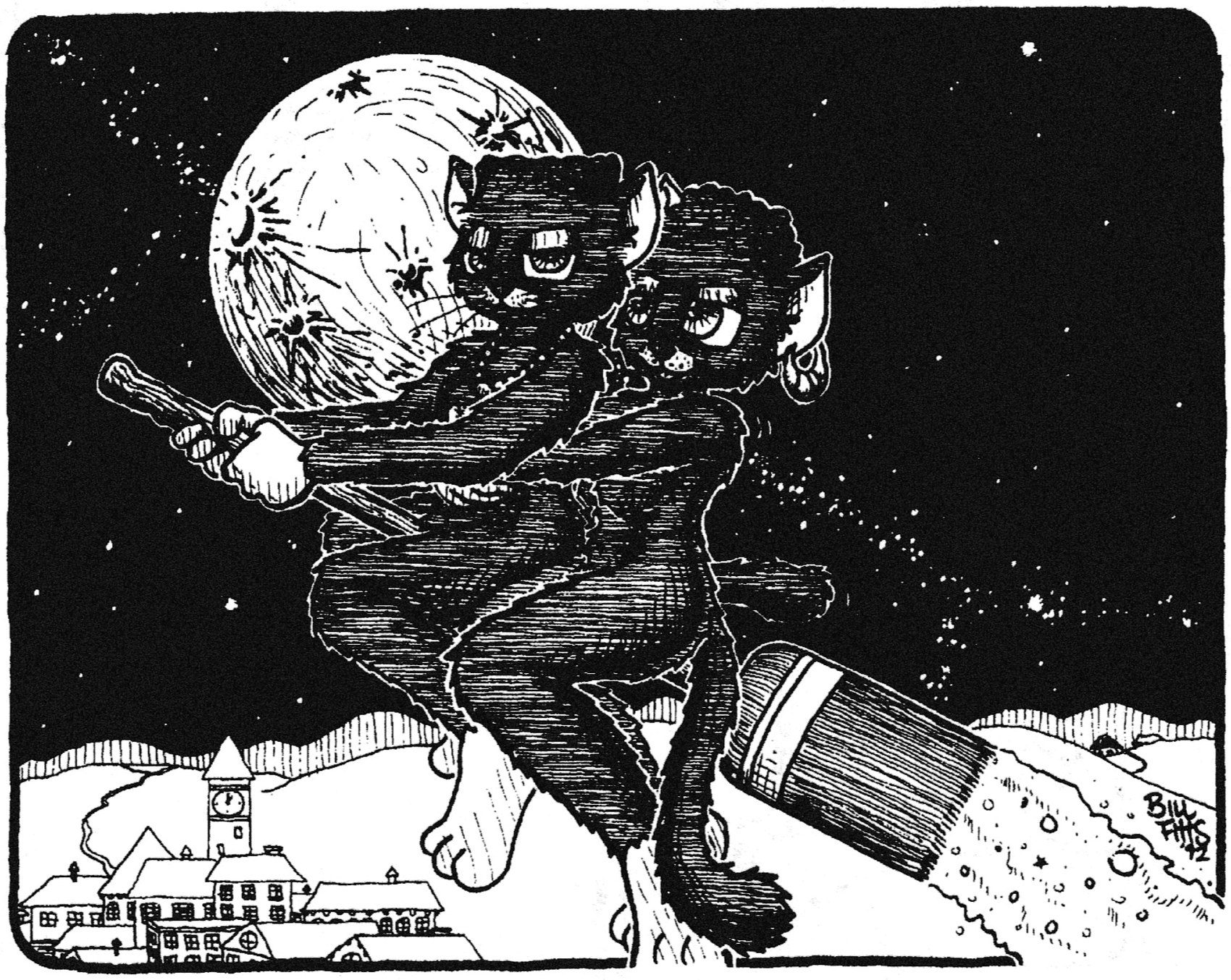
Bill has been writing and drawing comics since Junior High School. Self-taught, his influences include Robert Crumb, Vaughn Bode and Walt Kelly's "Pogo". Since 1980, he has published over 50 comic books and appeared in several hundred small press publications. Starting in 1985, Bill began working with Mark Bode on the popular black and white comic book, "Miami Mice". Following that, in 1987 Bill worked with Mark on "Gyro Force", an anthro / sci-fi series which ran for three issues. Currently Bill is producing work for Antarctic Press, Archie Comics and Grateful Dead Magazine, not to mention numerous small press publications.

Commissioned Artwork

Mr. Fitts is accepting contracts and commissions for still, scenic and sequential artwork. The price will vary depending on the complexity and medium of the request.

Mr. Fitts reserves the right to reject any commission offer based on content or concerning characters whose copyrights are owned by others.

Mr. Bill Fitts
Box No. 167
48 Shattuck Square
Berkeley, CA 94709



Span the Magic Lion in

Home Sweet Span

By Bill Fitts © 1994

-IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO?

SCA-SCROO~ SCRATCH ME~!!

SKRTCH-SKRCH-SKRIT

G-G-GAAAAHH....

-POOR HONEY...

...CA~CALL D-DOCTOR BURI D. BONE ~ HE'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO!

SOON...

HMM...YAH HERR SPAN, YOU ZERTAINLY GOTZ FLEAS...

~IS THERE GUK! ANY THING YOU CAN DO, D-DOC?

YAH, I TINK ZO...BUT CAN'T YOU CHUST "ZAPPEN" ZEM AWAY?

N-NO...

SKRIT SCRITCH SKRACH

ONLY IF I CAN SEE THEM... ..I MIGHT "ZAP" MYSELF, Y'SEE!

ACH, I ZEE..

SHORTLY...

OKAY ZEN, VE GIF YOU ZE FLEA BATH UND ZEE...

...AHHHH.....

FLEA-B-GONE

WHEW= THAT DOES FEEL GAH!!!

~STILL BOTHERING YOU, EH? LET ME TAKE A CLOSER LOOK....

:G-G-GUH...

-ACH! ZIS IZ VORSE THAN I THOUGHT!

"SAILING SAILING"...

...FOOD AROUND TH' CORNER...

-OKAY, LET ME TRY ZIS FLEA POWDER... LORD KNOWS, IT VORKS ON MIEN VIFE, BLESS HER MUSTY HIDE!

H-HURRY—!

♫"LET IT ZNOW, LET IT ZNOW..."♩

AHHH...

=SHK=
=SHOOK=
=SHK=

VELL, I'LL BE ON MY WAY~~~

BLAM-BLAM!!

GIK!

-ACH! ZIS IS VERY DIZTURBING!!

-WHAT?

...ZE FLEAS HAF TAKEN ZE POWDER, COOKED IT UP INTO LITTLE ROCKS, AND ARE SELLING IT IN TEENY VIALS.... ..ZAT "BANG" VAS A DRIFE-BY SHOOTING!!

-SWELL...

¿CHOKE?

HMM...ZE FLEA COLLAR VILL NOT FIT AROUND YOUR MANE, HERR SPAN...

..AND SOON...

VELL, I TINK ZIS SHOULD DO ZE TRICK, HERR SPAN...

I HOPE SO...

..BY ZIMPLY PLACING ZEESE ON YOUR BACK, I THINK VE VILL BE RID OF YOUR PROBLEM!

?

..WITHIN THE HOUR...

WOW DOC'!! I DON'T FEEL THEM ANYMORE! HOW DID YOU DO IT?!?

..VAZ EASY! I PUT THESE AROUND FOR ZEM TO SEE, AND PREZTO! NO MORE PEZKY FLEAS!

-TAKE A LOOK...

AH-HA...

FLEA CIRCUS

FLEAS WANTED

FLEAS! JOIN THE CIRCUS! AREN'T YOU CAN EAT! APPLY INSIDE!!!

-YOUR A GENIUS, DOC'!! HERE, YOU DESERVE THIS!!

PUFF!

-ACH!

..AHH... FREE AT LAST...

...I WONDER, THOUGH, WHERE TH' FLEAS WENT... Y'KNOW, LIKE, WHERE'S THE "CIRCUS"?

-ACH! ALL IN A DAYS VORK!

=OOCH!= =OUCHY=

FOOD AROUND TH' CORNER!

WOO!

"SEND IN THE CLOWNS..."

BILL FITTS

Craig Carrington

Background

One of Craig's many goals in life is to become a professional artist, writer and lyricist. An experienced character designer, Craig is looking for work in the fields of animation and illustration. He attributes great many classical and modern influences to the development of his personal style of illustration.

Growing up in the San Francisco Bay area instilled a love of the surreal and the psychedelic art explosion of the late 60's.

Commissioned Artwork

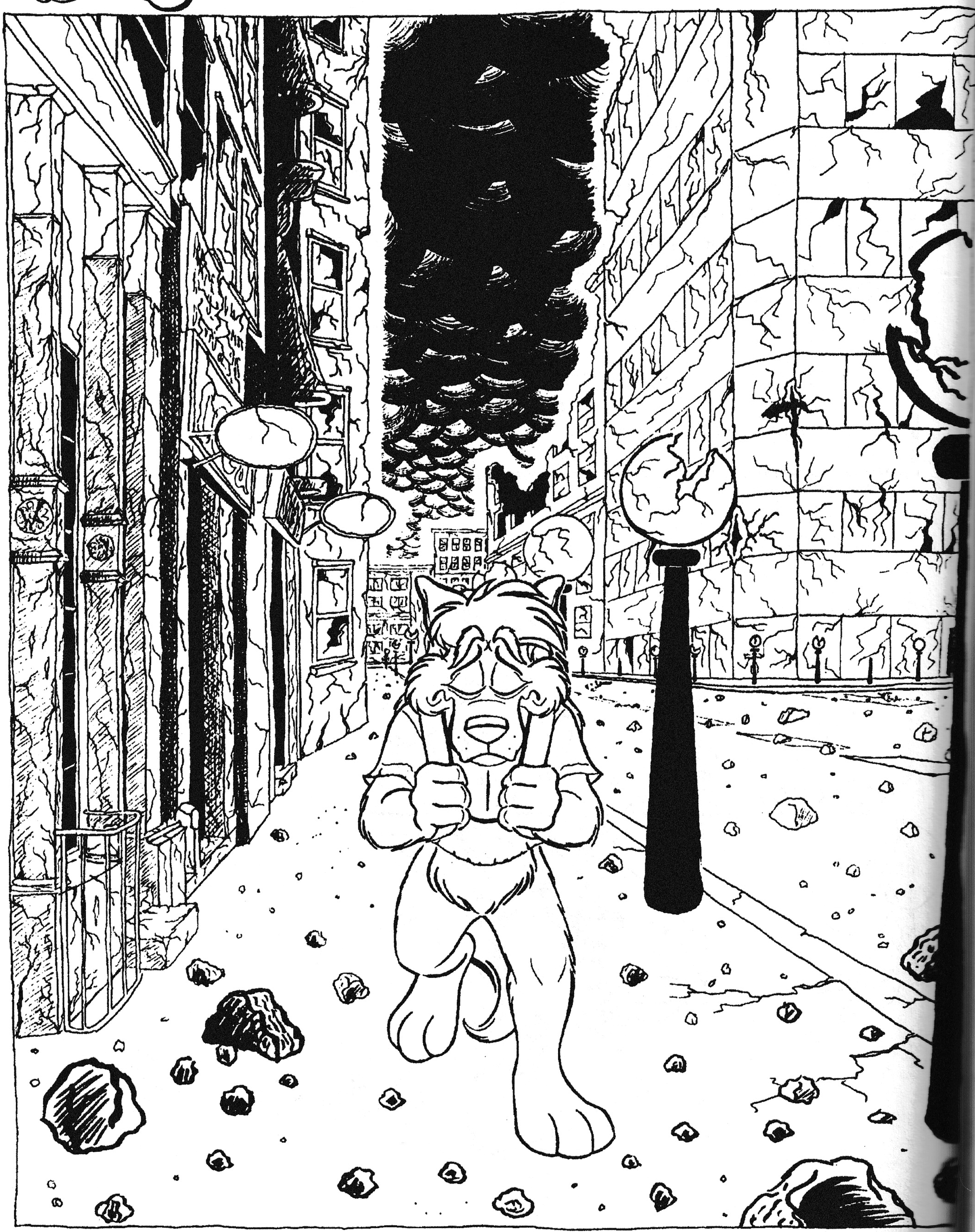
Mr. Carrington is accepting commissions. The price will vary depending on the complexity of the request.

Mr. Carrington reserves the right to reject any commission offer based on content or concerning characters whose copyrights are owned by others.

Mr. Craig Carrington
Post Office Box 325
Buffalo Creek, CO 80425

PART TWO
Craig Carrington

...To be continued in a graphic novel



RALPH'S
Grocery
7:00
8:00
TAKE ONE
HOME FOR THE DRIVE
POP
POP

Sorry, We're CLOSED

GRRSEEAK...

SLAM

HEY WAIT A MINUTE!

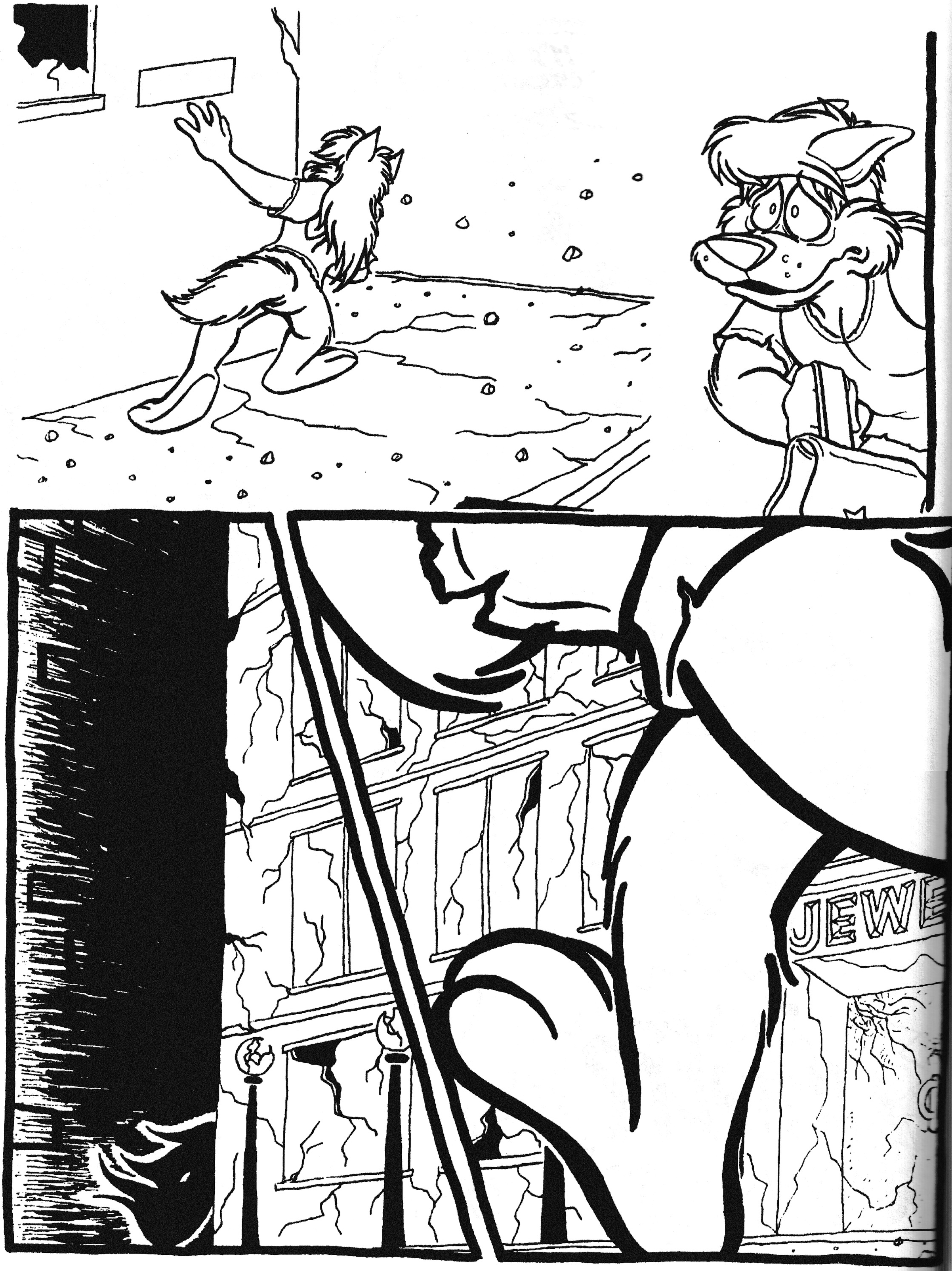
STOP!

IT'S OKAY! YOU CAN TRUST ME!

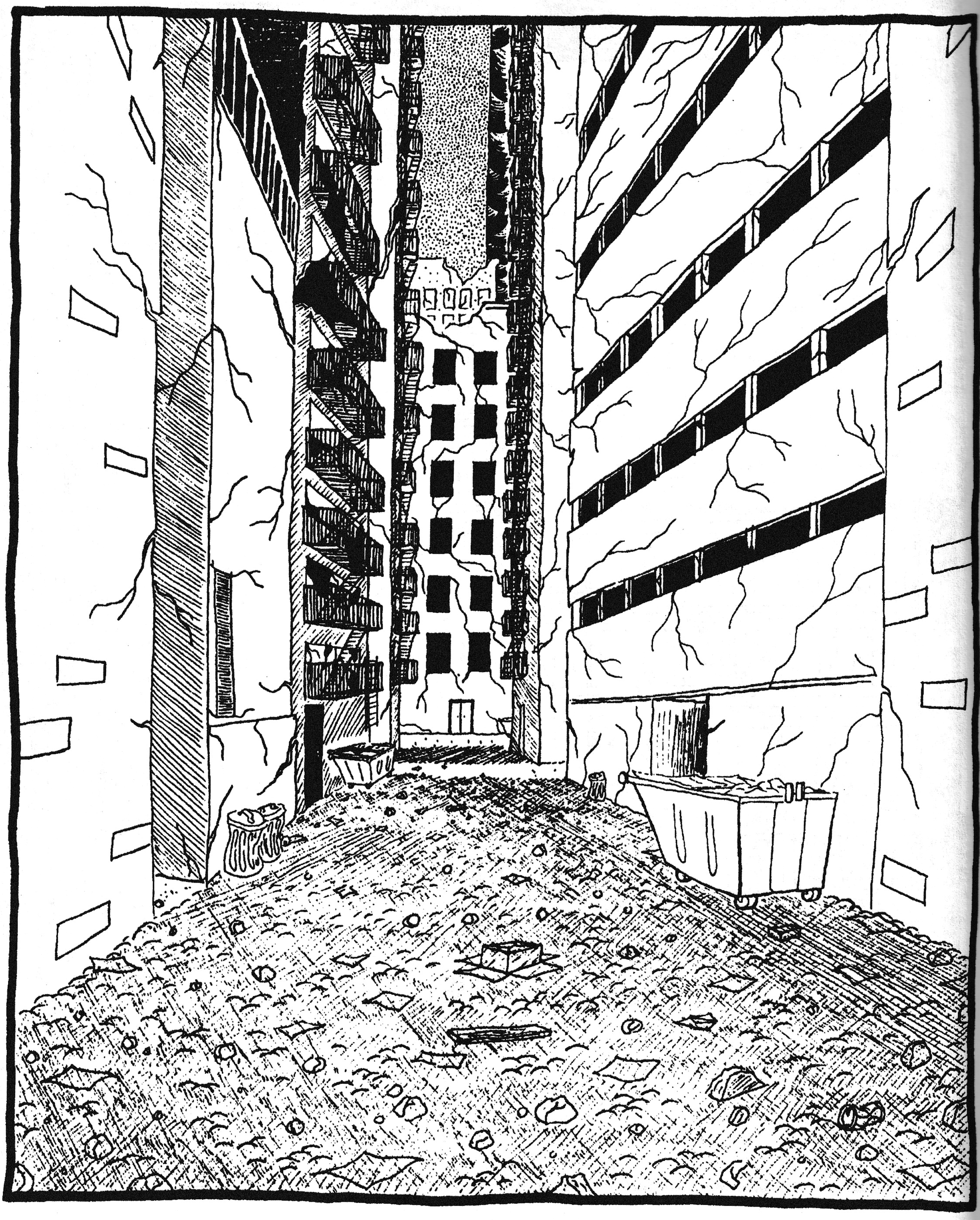
I PROMISE I WON'T HURT YOU!

PLEASE STOP!

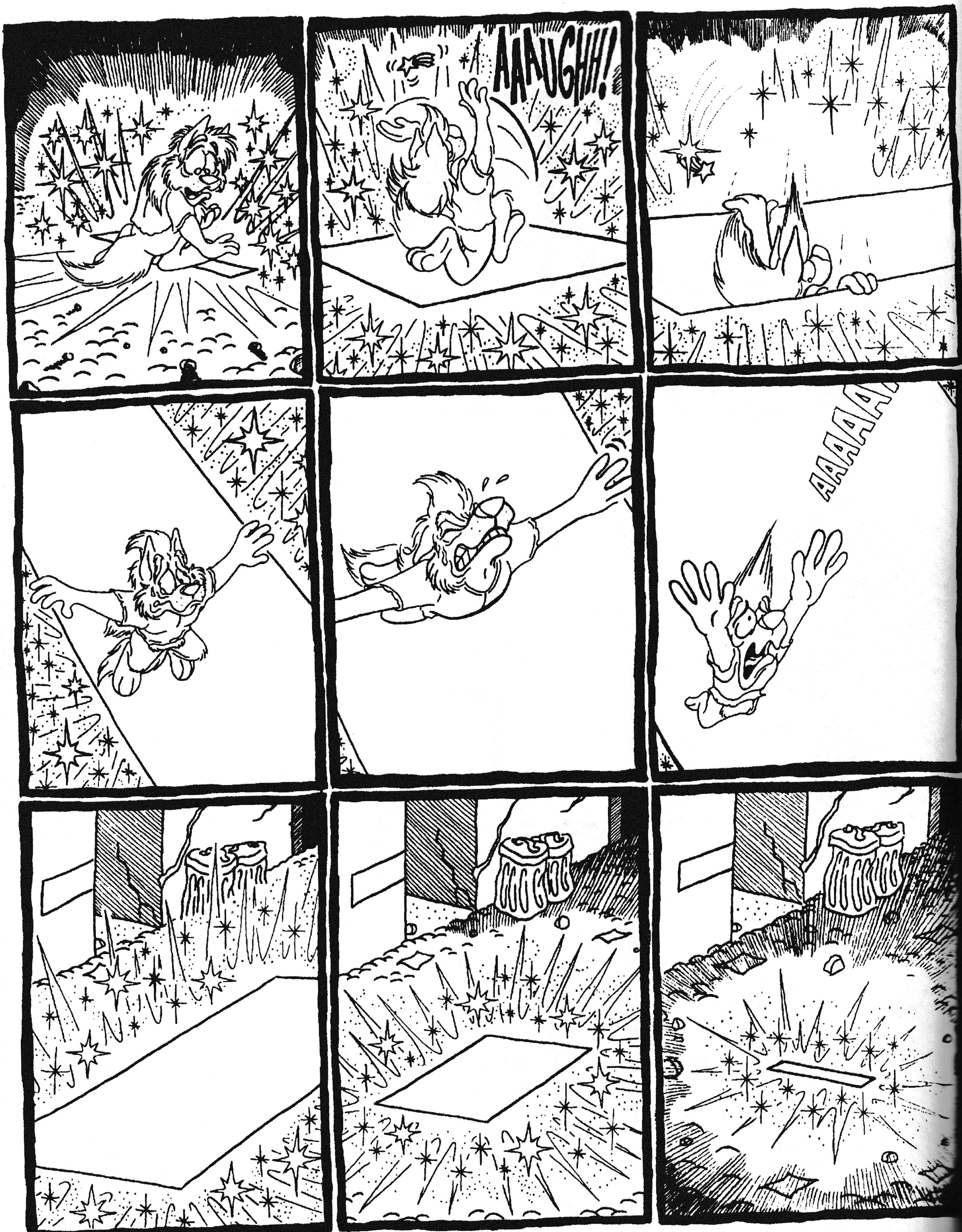
PLEASE!??

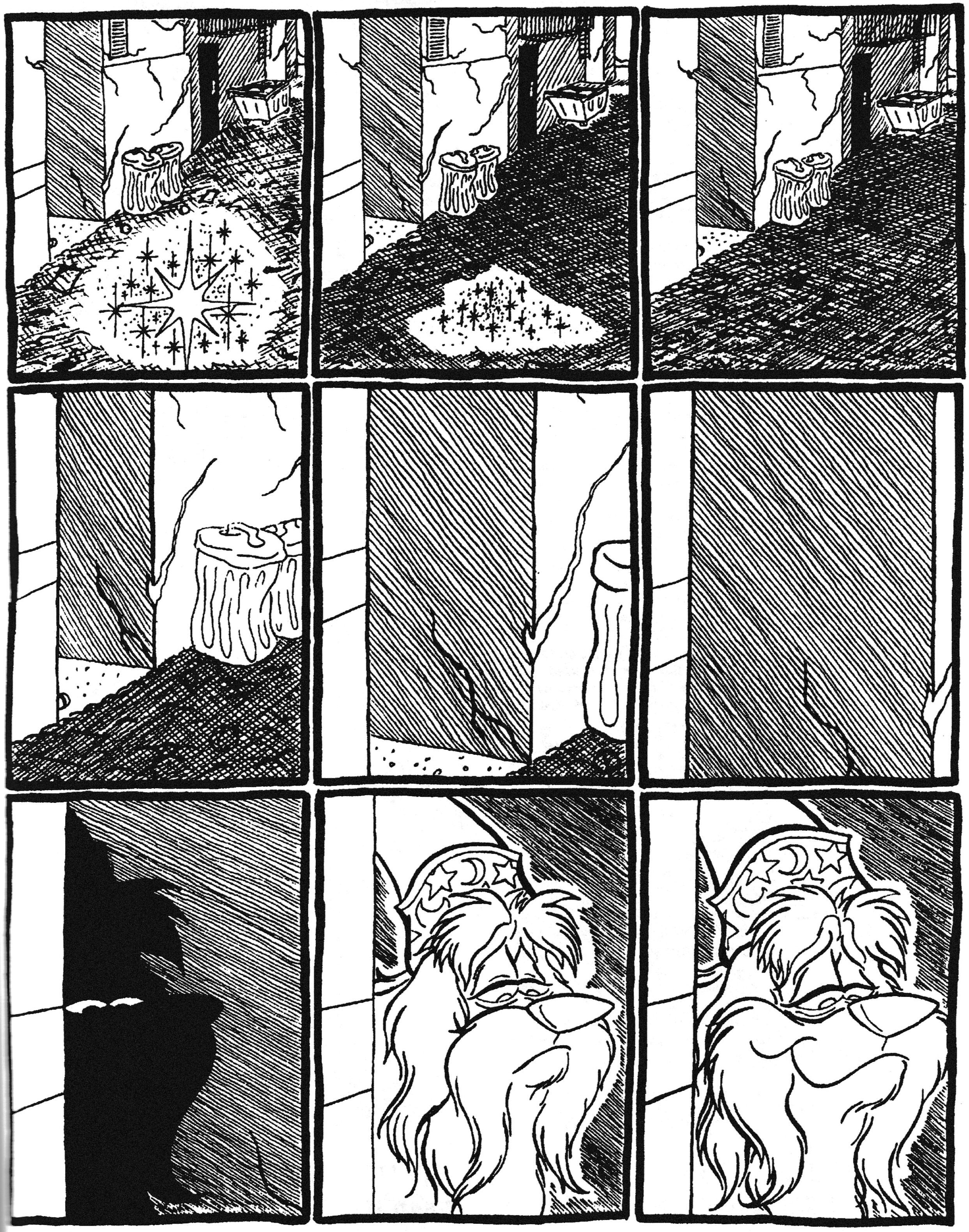

JEWE

DE ANZA HOTEL



....HELLO?


AAAUGHH!
AAAA



Golden Realm Unlimited presents a dynamic new line of comics unlike anything you've ever seen!

Dream Weavers™

Written by Jose Calderón and illustrated by Matthew Lunsford

Demons have broken through the dimensional walls holding them out for centuries. Only the powers of the Mystics and a handful of Celcurity officers can hold off the worlds dominating power of the Trinity Guard and their masters.

REEVER™

Written by Jose Calderón and illustrated by Xahc

Tying in with Dream Weavers, one of the Trinity Guard is dead. The only thing remaining is the demon suit of armor giving its power to any who seek revenge. Crystal, a young homeless woman, cruelly beaten by young gang members, is transformed to her youth and seeks out all of those people who have led to her eternal state.

Tall Tails™

Written by Jose Calderón and illustrated by Daphne Lage

A seal containing great magical powers has been stolen, a young prince kidnapped, and a troll king drunk with power wishes for more. To avert war, Ravenwood, Gabriel, Klea, Pandora, Silvermain and Ralph the Destroyer set out to bring back the seal.

All three titles available in three editions:

Readers' Edition:
Color cover printed on 70# glossy standard with black and white 35# Hi-Brite interior (standard comic book stock)

Collectors' Edition:
Color cover printed on 10pt card stock with black and white 50# white offset interior

GOLD Edition:
Color GOLD FOIL enhanced cover printed on 10pt. card stock with black and white, 50# white offset interior. Limited to a printing of 500 copies. Signed and numbered by the artists and writer and sealed with a Certificate of Authenticity

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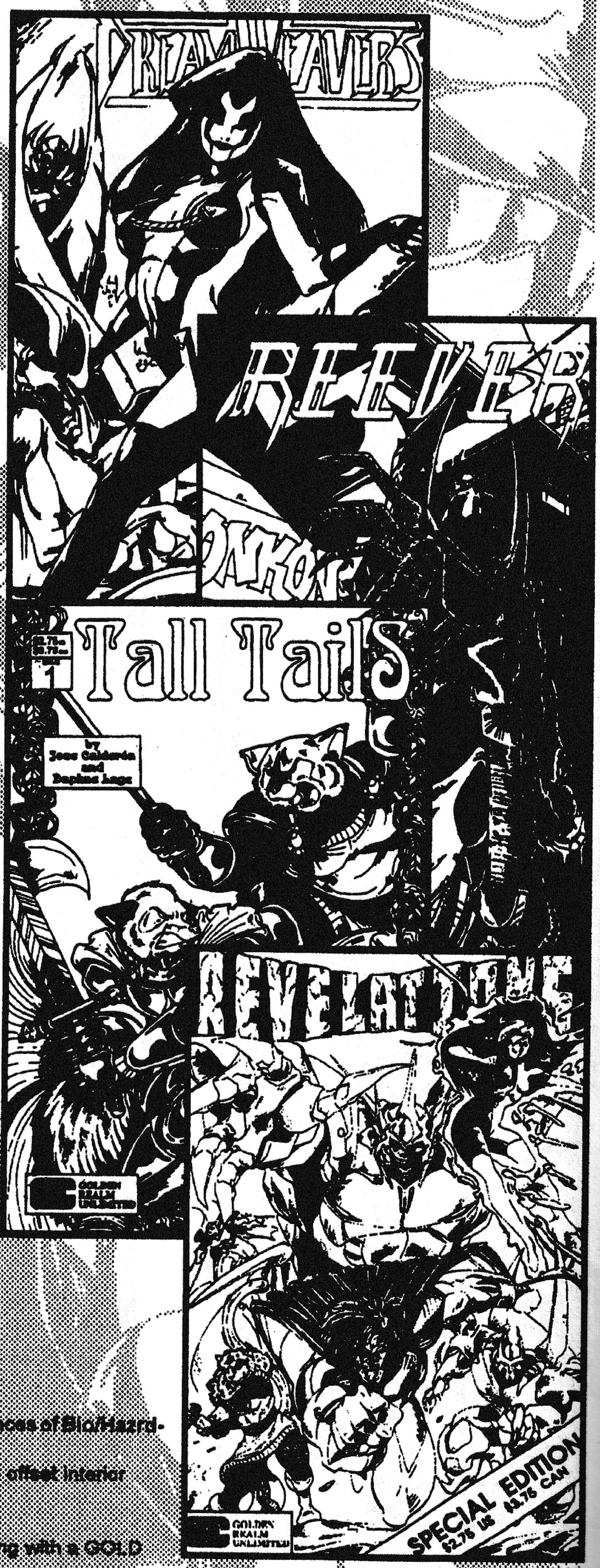

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Tales from the Reservation

An American Journal of Anthropomorphics Original

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* Events so far *

The Reservation lies in the northeastern corner of the continent of Australia, about eighty miles west of Chilagoe, on a section of land purchased from the government by a group of foreign investors many years ago. It is ringed all about with 20' tall metal fencing, to keep kangaroos (and others) out. It is privately owned and operated by its inhabitants, who are a little unusual, to say the least. The Reservation has one main road that runs through it, from east to west. It is governed by a mayor, who is elected from the populace. They have little formal contact with the outside world, but the isolation of their community is deliberate, as they have suffered much in the past, attempting to live among mankind.

Shem Reawn, a young and insecure social misfit on the Reservation who enjoys hacking access to computer systems across the world over the global networks, uncovered a series of Experience Modules, huge data files generated by Memory Analysis computers, on a rarely-accessed government computer somewhere in the United States. Memory Scan technology had been internationally banned over a hundred years prior, "officially" due to abuses and a side effect of occasional behavioral changes experienced by those who played them back without a specially designed series of synaptic filters in their viewing hardware.

Managing to partially decode one of the accompanying encrypted text files, he found that one was a scan analysis of Janet, one of the first Genetic Constructs, the progenitor of his species. His curiosity on the matter and the hope that he might be able to pick up some of the martial arts skills that Janet was reputed to possess in time for the Reservation's annual Tournament made his decision a quick one. Mren, one of the Reservation's most eligible females, was rumored to like good fighters, and if he did well in the Tournament, he dreamed that she would be his.

Shem was able to pick up an old Yokodai ImageTech sensory image inducer helmet, discontinued for some time and relatively cheap. With this, he began remotely viewing the huge module, section by section as he could spare the time, over the data link. Though he was well aware of the warnings surrounding Memory Scans, and had promised himself to only view so much, he was soon absorbed in the life of Janet, fascinated by the unwinding events, unaware of the slow changes that were creeping into his behavior.

In the latest work cycle assignments, Shem had drawn farm duty, one of the dullest tasks around, monitoring the automated farming system. Making the most of his relative isolation, he had bypassed the controls on one of the irrigation computers and used it to link to the workstation back in his home. Unfortunately, while viewing the Experience Module, time slipped by quite quickly. All his previous viewings had been an hour or two at best, beset by interruptions; now he sat unawares in the hot, stuffy control shack for seven hours as the sensor helmet dumped data and memories into his mind. Seriously dehydrated and suffering from mental disorientation, he collapsed upon awakening.

* * *

Shem came to slowly. His head hurt. His tongue was dry and slightly swollen. The metal decking was warm under his cheek. A memory of a dream faded as he tried to dizzily grasp it.

"Unnnh." groaned Shem as he sat up, clutching at the chair beside him for support.

Rubbing at his gritty eyes with one hand, he glanced at his watch and gasped. It was late afternoon! The airbus would be by to pick him up in a few minutes!

Staggering erect, he blinked back a wave of nausea and dizziness, crossing the room to the water cooler. Putting his hand over the sensor on the unit activated a cold, flat stream of sparkling water from the tap. Shem had barely drunk his fill when he heard the whooshing of the Airbus approaching.

Grabbing his bag and hastily stuffing it with scattered tools, connectors and his sensor helmet, Shem ran the farming console into evening mode with a few quick touches and dashed outside just as the Airbus wheezed to a stop on the road behind the shack.

Shem sat in the back, where he leaned his head against the glass of a window, trying to ride out the pounding headache that sat between his ears. But as he tried to ignore it, it seemed to move forward, to rest behind his eyes, whining in time to the ultrasonic shrill of the underfans as the bus shot along the dusty track, heading for the next stop, the Reservation water plant. Memories of what Janet had gone through kept surfacing in his mind with every throb of the headache, twisting and turning, like cubes of ice in a bowl of water. He looked out of the window, lost in thought, not even noticing when his father boarded the bus.

"Hey, son." his father said as he sat down beside him, eyeing his worn-out-looking son concernedly. "Are you all right?"

"Uh, it's just a headache." Shem murmured, blinking at his father. "I'll have some aspir... uh... bedenol when I get home."

Shem's father nodded, sitting back, not noticing his son's momentary confusion over what he was trying to say. The airbus finished loading the workers from the water plant and once again lifted on its fans, turning and shooting off across the scrub towards the residential areas.

That evening, Shem was pleasantly surprised at the new chairs that his father had ordered for the dining room; specially built for them by Turo, the Reservation's carpenter, they were not only of real, smoothly finished wood, but each featured a recessed channel in the center for their tails to rest in. Shem thought it was much nicer than projecting uncomfortably out through holes in the back, as they had with the others. During dinner, he wriggled experimentally in his, even slouched a little, quite pleased and comfortable. As he smiled across the table at his parents, he couldn't help but remember that Janet had never found a really comfortable chair.

* * *

That evening, lying in his bed in the darkness, Shem decided to refrain from using the helmet again. He made a positive resolution. It was affecting him. After he used it, he would get things confused sometimes with their older counterparts, and at times his mind would drift, and he would find himself thinking about Janet and her problems instead of his own. That wasn't getting him anywhere. He resolved to focus on practicing the moves he had experienced Janet doing when she worked out, and combining them with his own limited repertoire of one-stick and two-stick Escrima techniques.

And he did practice. Every day at the farm, after checking the

fluid levels in the tanks and starting the pumps, he went down into the cool alcohol bunker and worked out fiercely. He concentrated on his footwork and striking style, trying not to think about the sensor helmet that lay up in his bag in the control shed.

He stuck to his resolution for several days, even though he brought the helmet with him each time. He had no illusions about his skill as an Escrimador, but he thought he felt a significant improvement; he was able to now smoothly move from one series of slashing strikes to the next, and his footwork was noticeably more fluid. The stretching exercises which he had relived with Janet seemed to be impossible at first; in fact, he had despaired of accomplishing them, but eventually he found that it was only a matter of working up to their level and doing them regularly. The urge to go back in, and relive some more of Janet's life was very, very strong; she might work out again, and he could learn more maneuvers, just like last time. The thoughts ran through his head, time and again. This time he would set an alarm timer, to wake himself up; it wouldn't be so bad... And before he knew it, he was kneeling under the console, jacking the sensor helmet in, sticking it on his head and running through the login sequences that connected him to the far-distant computer in the United States. Shivering slightly in expectation and excitement, Shem sat back in his chair as the cortical inducers activated, throwing bright sparks in his vision as the world around him faded away, the eyeshields clicking down into place.

* * *

Janet was helpless in his grip. His hands were like iron, fueled by his paranormal physique. She was choking and began to panic as he shook her and shouted, "God Damn It! Now we are going to get some answers!" Apparently he thought she knew something about this as well... his eyes were wild, staring. He shook her so forcefully that her head slapped forward and back, making her dizzy and nauseous. Her jacket tore under his hand during one forceful shake and she fell to the ground, stunned.

Fortunately, at that point, Linda came up and made him stop, taking him aside and shouting at him. They retreated to a more intact section of the club as the police were evacuating the area and putting up police lines. Janet revealed the chip to the men in the presence of Linda and explained that she thought the creature was after Jarrey, or possibly the chip. Obviously Jarrey had not been entirely straight with them from the start; he knew lots more than he was telling. Unfortunately, he was in no condition to start talking now. Powerhouse was completely convinced that the creature was a Biodyne construct of some sort, and paid no heed to Janet's protests that Biodyne was defunct, broken up by an act of Congress, and that it had to be some other organization -- perhaps with a more sinister set of goals. The men took the chip off to "Doc", whoever that might be, as Janet and Linda were once again left to their own devices. Janet was puzzled. how had the creature known his location? It had to have been sent by someone... who else had known about the chip and Jarrey? Only one man; Mr. Scott Randolph. Although Janet had not wanted to know what the chip was or where Randolph had gotten it before, out of respect for Jarrey's privacy, it was time to find out. Janet expressed her concerns regarding Mr. Randolph to Linda as they drove back to the Dirty Gene Pool. There, in the club's office, Linda pulled out a pistol from a drawer and asked if Janet knew how to shoot. Responding diffidently that she had fired a few shots in her time, Janet casually checked the clip, worked the action to chamber a round and pocketed the pistol, a semi-automatic Walther PPK. Linda took another pistol and the shotgun. That creature was still on the loose; who knew where it might be or who it might attack. Together, they went out to the van.

The street was deserted when they pulled up to Randolph's house. They climbed out of the van, Linda concealing the shotgun under her coat as they walked up the drive. Janet stood in front and knocked on the door. Scott Randolph came to the door dressed in slippers and a smoking jacket. He appeared quite surprised to see Janet. His expression changed from surprise to anger in a trice, though. "I thought we agreed that we were never going to meet again!", he said in an angry whisper. His wife called from the living room behind him, asking who it was. He angrily spoke over his shoulder that he would handle it.

Janet told him that it was time for him to come clean with them. Her brother was in the hospital and she needed answers. Randolph merely sneered at her. Drawing her pistol, Janet pressed it into his stomach, stepping close. "We'll discuss this in the vehicle, Mr. Randolph", she said in a menacing tone.

Instead of the reaction she expected, Randolph seemed amused, almost as though he knew he was in no danger from her. "What, are you going to shoot me?", he asked. Janet, disgusted, pulled him out of his house and onto the drive by one arm. He seemed surprised at her strength, struggling ineffectually until he caught sight of Linda, and the shotgun she was holding. At that point, he stiffened, acquiesced and walked quietly to the van with them.

Janet put him in the back and Linda drove them several blocks away, where they parked. In the dimly lit van, Janet began asking him questions, such as exactly what that chip was, where did Randolph get it and why did Jarrey want it? What did he know about an organization known as Biodyne? Was Randolph having Jarrey break in and remove the files acting under the instructions of Theorison or was he the instigator of the event?

Randolph lied, lied and lied some more. Some of them Janet caught him on, but he quickly and smoothly changed his story as she threatened him with bodily harm. Randolph was a shrewd man who had the uncommon ability of being able to think on his feet and adjust to very bad situations. He was an accomplished actor and quite convincing. Despite Janet's striking him several times, he managed to maintain his composure and only made two mistakes throughout the entire interrogation. The first was when, after Janet had dragged from him an admission that he was working for the people behind RevCo, that he wanted her to "look in his wallet" for the information she wanted. Not being in his normal business suit, he was not carrying his normal wallet, but rather a thin leather case which, among other things, contained an ATM card with the old Biodyne logo emblazoned upon it. The second was when he unfortunately began trying to blame everything on Theorison. Janet had noticed that Linda became progressively more unstable when Theorison's name was mentioned in conversations, especially so if he was being accused of wrongdoing. When Linda felt Randolph had told them all he knew, she put the shotgun to his head, her finger tightening on the trigger. She was going to kill him! Janet intervened by the narrowest of margins, saving his life. Her eyes were wide as she regarded the enraged Linda, who stared back at her, fuming. This woman was bordering on a psychopathic obsession with Theorison, and was definitely not safe to be or have around!

After a rather taut conversation with Linda, Janet dropped Randolph off in the driveway of his house, with the

admonition to have nothing more to do with these people behind RevCo. Linda, out of Janet's reach, struck Randolph across the face with the stock of the shotgun, breaking his jaw and laying him out cold. As Linda drove the truck away in a cloud of tire smoke, Janet spoke up, severely distressed. "You shouldn't have done that, you know", she said. Linda turned on her and almost screamed, "Shut Up! That son of a bitch deserved it!". It was obviously impossible to reason with the woman; she was unbalanced and worse yet, armed. Janet shrank back in her seat and was quiet as they got on the highway and drove to the city. All the way back, Linda softly talked to herself, making plans to talk with Theorison and deal with the situation. Janet said nothing. Nothing at all.

The Dirty Gene Pool was not too heavily packed that evening, Linda having asked the staff in front to keep the crowd a little loose. Janet, dancing on her platform, noticed that those two men she had seen earlier in the courthouse at Jarrey's arraignment were walking about the club again. They paused for a minute or so on the stairway leading to the offices and upper level before leaving the club altogether. Several hours later, after her shift was over, Janet got packed up and ready to leave. As she exited the club, she paused in the doorway and automatically scanned the parked cars along both sides of the street. She was not altogether surprised when she saw the pair sitting in a parked car, watching the exit. Were they doing surveillance on her? There was one sure way to find out... she stretched her arms over her head and yawned, right there in the street, showing her teeth and jaw in high profile. A passerby stared and hurried on, not really wanting to know exactly what it was he had just seen. Janet, just making sure that anyone looking at her in her heavy coat and hat could not mistake her for a normal person, pulled her collar up a little against the cold and began walking down the sidewalk away from the pair of men in the car. They did not start up the car or follow her; thus they were looking at or for someone else. But who? Janet grew angry. She was tired of running from and hiding in the shadows. The gun Linda had given her was a welcome and comforting weight in her pocket as she went around the block and came up behind the car. Boldly, she knocked on the passenger-side window.

The fellow inside the car in the passenger seat was the shorter man, with slicked-back hair. She immediately dubbed him "Shorty" in her mind. He glanced up at her in surprise, looked to his left at the tall man in the driver's seat, said something to him and rolled down the window. The tall man in the driver's seat put one hand inside his jacket. Janet knew without looking that he was gripping the butt of a gun. "Yes?" Shorty asked. Janet peered in at him and said, "Are you a cop or a member of a law enforcement agency?" The fellow's mouth worked oddly and his eyebrows twitched. "Step away from the car, please, Miss" he said as he began to open the door.

Janet stepped back as he got out of the vehicle. If he meant to intimidate her by standing up, he failed. He was a good three inches shorter than she was. He looked up at her and said, "Obviously you know that if I'm a member of a law enforcement agency, I am required to identify myself as such when asked. Are you trying to blow this stakeout?"

Janet was nonplussed. "Why don't you just tell me what the hell is going on here?", she asked. Shorty looked around and then said, "All right. Get in the car, please", as he opened the back door. Janet hesitated a moment, then slid inside as he walked around to the other side and got in. The driver started the vehicle and pulled away from the curb. Through the course of the conversation that followed, Janet learned that these two men were FBI agents, and that they were engaged in surveillance on Linda. They advised her to keep her distance from Linda, something to which Janet had already privately resolved to do after her experience in the van. Shorty had been briefed by his superiors with a false story about her, which was both good and bad. It was good that he did not know she was not a "real" person, but it was bad in that he knew she had been the recipient of some specialized military training. It might throw more suspicion her way... something she could simply not afford. Janet played along for a while and was eventually let out a few blocks away, much the wiser. She went home, her mind burdened with what she had learned.

The next morning, Janet was lying in bed in her small apartment, thinking about everything that had happened, trying to fit the pieces together to form a cohesive whole in her mind. A knock at the door interrupted her musings. Putting her jacket with the pistol in its pocket on the back of the door, within easy reach, she slowly opened the door. It turned out to be Linda and Energon. Janet was understandably uneasy in their presence, as though Linda might suddenly go crazy and start shooting or Energon be overwhelmed by lust and try to attack her. After a few moments of conversation, this unreasonable nervousness faded, but Janet was still wary of Linda, even though she appeared much more stable than she had the other evening. The government was watching her; therefore it was unsafe to be seen with her or even associate with her, lest it bring down more attention on Janet. Unwelcome attention. She would have to somehow find a way to keep her distance without tipping Linda off.

Janet greeted them amiably enough, even though they both appeared disgusted at the poverty evidenced by the room and its furnishings. Janet was neither offended or embarrassed; this was the way things were, and there was nothing she could do to change them at the moment. She kept the room neat and clean -- so what if the paint was cracked on the walls or the bulb hung from a cord in the ceiling? Living within ones means was nothing to be ashamed of in her eyes. After all, not everyone owned clubs and fancy cars.

When Linda remarked under her breath that no one had to live like this, Janet reminded her that many people did, several dozen in this building alone. Linda seemed disgruntled and dropped the subject, although she and Energon refused an offer of coffee. It might be for the best anyway, thought Janet. She only had one good coffee cup; the other had a cracked rim.

During the discussion that followed, Energon pulled out a flat metal case and gave it to Janet. It seemed some sort of communicator, and simple enough to operate. Energon got to discussing the attack that had taken place at the old base, where Psion had been killed. At Janet's questioning, it came out that none of them had been back there to search for the identities of their assailants or clues as to their current whereabouts. Shaking her head, Janet suggested that they take a look that evening. It had been over a week since the murder. Surely the police force could not be devoting too much manpower to keep a watch on the place. They could sneak in, look around and leave. The others reluctantly agreed that they might find something the police had missed and began making plans to go.

It was late at night when the trio pulled up to the old house. Sure enough, there was an unmarked Gran Fury police car sitting out in front, plain as day with its searchlight on the driver's side. They approached the house from the rear, entering the structure through the large hole in one wall

where Powerhouse and Energon had blasted their way free following the attack. There was a good deal of Police tape over the hole, but careful work with a pocketknife took it out without looking as though it had been bypassed. The hallway inside was dark; Janet turned on the penlight she had brought and flashed it about as they proceeded. The trio advanced down the corridor slowly, the light playing across the walls and darkened doorways. Energon was visibly nervous, a screen of shimmering energy surrounding him as he floated down the hallway, feet not touching the floor. Janet was sure if there was a sudden noise, she would have to dive for cover as he would explode in a wash of energy, blasting out at imagined assailants. If that happened, the police would no doubt call for backup, and all hell would break loose. Once again she regretted the presence of these two unstable people. She hoped they would be able to hold their wits together long enough for her to find something useful out and get them off on some other track, away from her.

They found their way, slowly, to the computer room. After examining the damaged and rewired components and controls, they realized that although most of the power to the base and computer was off, certain components and sections were still under power. It was as though someone had simply cut all of the sections of the computer that had to deal with its higher-level functions, bypassing directly into the submodules that controlled the various sections of the base, such as light, power, heat, internal defenses, cameras and the like. It had all been rerouted somewhere; control leads were wrapped up in a long loom conduit that led off, down the hallway, all the way down to the Power Systems Lab.

Once there, they saw that the large, vault-like door to the lab was closed and locked with its thick internal crossmembers. It looked like someone, probably the police, had been attempting to use a blowtorch on the door. But such a huge mass of metal must have dissipated the heat too rapidly to be cut, and they had given up. Janet eyed the lock scanning plate critically. If she could get it off and at the electronics behind, she might be able to get the door open. She said as much to her companions, who looked at her oddly but began searching for a tool kit. Back in the computer room, they uncovered two technical suitcases filled with tools, jumper cables, and everything else she might need. Moving back to the Power Systems Lab with these cases, Janet set to work. She carefully unscrewed the four retainers holding the plate on, noting as she did so by the broken ring of dirt that they had been opened before, relatively recently. She carefully moved the plate out a tiny amount, flashing the penlight behind it. As she had suspected, there was a trip wire attached. Whether it was part of the original installation or put in by the killers was yet to be seen. Reaching in with a small pair of needle-nose pliers, she clipped a jumper cable to the wire leading to the plate and one to the plate itself, assuring continuity. Switching to a pair of wire cutters, Janet tried to reach into the narrow gap between the plate and wall to snip the wire. The wire was tough, and Janet had to bear down strongly from an awkward position. Suddenly, the clippers snipped through the wire and, as Janet's hand jerked with the release of tension, pulled forcefully to one side, tripping the switch and knocking the jumper wire off.

Janet froze, eyes closed, waiting for the explosion. When nothing happened, she opened one eye and breathed a sigh of relief. There was no block of explosives waiting behind the plate. The sensor was blinking a small LED on and off. Janet's eye caught a small light on the wristwatch Energon was wearing blinking in time to it. Some sort of internal alarm, then. Whew! Janet's heartbeat slowed down as she opened the panel the rest of the way and peered inside. After a few minutes of examining the electronics, Janet realized that once the computer system recognized the handprint on the scanning plate, it would throw a relay that would engage the door motors. All she had to do was manually engage the relay and the door should open, provided that there was power to that subsystem. A rather poorly designed locking mechanism, she thought.

A few more minutes work with jumper cables and the penlight rewarded Janet with a heavy metallic clacking noise as the locking crossmembers retracted and the door began to hiss open. Something had been braced against it from the inside, which caused the hydraulics to squeal under the strain, but it bent and snapped off, allowing the door to fully retract into the wall. The lab was open.

* * *

Shem blinked and groped at the console, pausing the data stream as the alert timer he had set buzzed. He took the helmet off, shaking his head to clear it of the dizziness that coming out of sensor input with two perspectives sometimes gave him. He drank some water, washed down a sandwich, reset the timer and continued.

* * *

Flushed with her success, Janet turned to her companions, only to find them standing off to one side, furiously whispering amongst one another. Her ears caught the words, "Biodyne Spy" and "Agent", but as they saw her flashing the penlight in their direction, they hurried up. Janet's tail flicked nervously at what she had overheard, though there was little to be done about it. They went in.

Although worried about the mental state of her comrades, Janet was overwhelmed by the cavernous lab that lay behind the door. There was light in here, and power. Turning on the rest of the lights revealed that control lines were strung from conduits into a bank of monitors and terminals. Apparently, all of the subcontrol modules in the computer room had been wired up to be directly controlled from this room. Activating the monitors, Janet was able to get various views of the building, down hallways and in empty rooms. The group split up and began searching the lab, hoping that the people who had been here had left some clue as to their identities or whereabouts. After quite a while of looking, all that turned up was a blue wooden bead, the type used for simple decorations on clothing or jewelry. They sat down in chairs and looked at each other, not very pleased at all.

Janet voiced the question that had been rattling around inside her head. If the door was locked and jammed shut from the inside, how did the people that were in here get out? Casting about, she spied an air ventilation shaft grille against one wall. Bringing over one of the tool cases, she pried it off with a screwdriver, shining the penlight inside. Sure enough, the dust that lay along the bottom of the shaftway had been disturbed, as though something had been dragged through it. None of them were small enough to fit inside the air shaft, though. Janet puzzled over the components that lay strewn about the laboratory. Could she construct some sort of wire-controlled camera that they could send down the shaft to see if anything had been left behind? After a while of struggling to remove one of the security cameras from its hidden niche in the wall, Energon, in conference with Tim over the communicator, found out that the air shafts apparently had small cameras that could move down recessed tracks. Tim's instructions helped Energon to bring up some of the lower computer control functions on one of the terminals. They sent one of the motorized

cameras scurrying from it's compartment down the shaftway, looking for anything left behind by the person or persons who had been crawling through them; a bundle of clothing, tools, or whatever. After several long minutes of this, they discovered a throwing star, lying half-concealed in the dust on the bottom of the shaftway, as though it had slid out of a pocket or pouch while crawling. Engraved upon it in Japanese Kana was the name, "Sakura". It seemed only to verify Energon's worst fears; that the assassin who had killed Psion and attacked them was their old team mate, the government spy, and she was now working with their worst enemy, Derzon. He knew that Derzon had played a part in the killing of Psion; they had heard his voice in their minds before Sakura attacked. Only Derzon could have done all of this complicated rewiring of the Base's electronics in so short a time, he reasoned. Janet felt that he was giving this "Derzon" person a bit too much credit, but said nothing. After spending a few more minutes searching unprofitably, they were ready to depart. Janet removed her bypass from the scanning plate assembly. With a hiss and a clack, the doors closed and locked once again. She carefully refastened and reactivated the plate so it looked as though no one had been there. Making their way stealthily back to the hole in the wall, they slunk outside and back to the waiting van without getting seen by anyone. The ride back was silent.

Back at the half-demolished club, Janet asked Linda and Energon to accompany her on a quick trip down the hole that the creature had made. She wanted to see for herself where it had come out. Despite Energon's protests that the tunnel dead-ended, she procured two heavy-duty flashlights and descended into the hole with Linda. Obviously the creature had come out somewhere; the tunnel could not simply dead-end. But it was not only pointless to mention this to Energon, as he never listened to her, but possibly dangerous, so Janet kept silent. Energon, grumbling about the waste of time, followed. They walked and walked down the twisting tunnel... Energon exclaimed that when he had been flying, it had seemed like such a short trip; but the tunnel extended for miles. Eventually they came to the dead-end that Energon had mentioned, a fall of loose dirt and rock that completely closed off the tunnel end. Upon close examination under the powerful beams of the flashlights, it was revealed that the dirt blocking the path had come from an excavation above; the creature had tunneled upwards from this point. This, then, must be where the creature exited the tunnel. But surely the creature could not have dug the tunnel down which they had been walking in so short a time; this had to have been an existing tunnel that the creature had known of. It had dug down into it from the club and made its escape; tunneling upwards and out when it needed to. Surely, that was how it had to have been... or so Janet tried to convince herself. Any other possibility led to speculations she could not even begin to consider. Nothing, nothing, could dig a several mile long tunnel like this in a matter of minutes. Janet suppressed a nervous shudder. What if there were more than one of these creatures? What if they were tunneling under the city, forming some sort of hive? She suddenly did not want to be down in this tunnel, in the darkness... for surely, if one or more of these creatures emerged and attacked them, they would have no chance at all, despite Energon's foolish boasting.

Digging into the dirtfall, they eventually cleared enough away to reveal a rough shaft leading upwards at an angle. Energon flew them up this, each holding one of his arms. They emerged in a deserted lot in Brooklyn, near the Woodlawn cemetery. Although there were signs that the creature had passed this way (an acid-melted handprint in a nearby lamppost), there was not enough scent remaining for Janet to track it by. Eventually, they gave up and Linda hailed a cab to take them back to one of Linda's offices.

While sitting with the two back in the office at 2 AM over a strong cup of coffee, turning over everything they had seen or thought about the night's investigations, Janet got the idea of checking out the card they had taken from Randolph on an ATM. Agreeing, they drove her out to one at a nearby college campus.

At this early hour of the morning, no one was about. The building was deserted as Janet walked up to the ATM outside the lobby. She inserted the card and puzzled over the PIN number. After a few tries, she entered the first four digits of the card number. With an electronic beep, she had access! Suppressing a wry grin of victory, she checked the current balance and blinked several times before the number on the screen made sense, her smile fading as fast as it had come. Mr. Scott Randolph had over three million dollars available in this account! She grew a little dizzy and clutched at the sides of the ATM for support. Three million dollars? What did it mean? Obviously, Randolph was a bigger player in this game than she had realized. Perhaps the game itself was bigger than she had realized. Had she let the very person responsible for Jarrey's injuries slip off the hook? Who had known about Jarrey and the chip other than Randolph? Could he have been responsible for the attack by the creature? Who was Randolph? Was he a father, stockbroker, husband... or was it all a lie; a front, like RevCo? Was this all engineered just to set up Theorison? What had she stumbled on to? She had to find Randolph... but he had had more than a day... he would be a fool not to have hightailed it out by now, if even ONE of the things she suspected were true. Her mind raced. She had to speak with Jarrey; but he was most likely heavily sedated in the hospital. Her only option now was to find Scott Randolph and wring the truth from him. But she could not bring Linda or Energon... who knew what might happen if she found out too much... or if they grew more suspicious of her? She would have to go it alone, despite the dangers and difficulties involved. She went back to the van and told them enough of what she had learned and speculated to set them off on their own personal projects; Linda to find Theorison, Energon to tell these events to the other surviving team members as Janet pretended to take off to go home and get some sleep.

Janet stopped off at an all-night pawn shop, argued with the owner about letting her in, despite her appearance, finally having to flash money at him. After more haggling, she picked up a pair of binoculars. She then took a train and a cab to a few blocks away from Mr. Randolph's house.

Shivering in the pre-dawn twilight, Janet peered about for a tree that would be high enough for her to get a view of Randolph's street and look for watching police or FBI, but there were none. Clenching her fists in disappointment, she moved a little closer to the Randolph family's house. From the next block over, she came up between the houses, quietly climbing over fences and bushes until she had a view of the front of his house from the yard opposite. The driveway was empty; the lights were off. The street lamp dimly illuminated a FOR SALE sign on the front lawn.

Janet was so angry at herself she could have spat. To have come so close and let him get away! She gritted her teeth in frustration and impotently beat her fists on her knees.

* * *

"Wow!" Shem murmured as he paused the data flow again in response to the buzzing alert. He sat up and rubbed at his temples. He felt fine, despite the heat of the control shed. He

HELLO
HOW MAY I HELP YOU TODAY?
PLEASE INSERT CARD

could still feel the echo of Janet's frustration and anger thrilling through him. Her every emotion seemed so intense; so very, very vivid. His ears flicked in annoyance at the pain from his sore muscles as he stood up and stretched. His eyes flicked over the console. Everything was green. Checking the clock and resetting the timer, he continued.

* * *

After a moment or two of intense self-criticism, she thought about things more logically. Perhaps, she reasoned, in his haste to depart, he had left something behind. Peering out to make sure the coast was clear, Janet stealthily crossed the street and went around the side of the Randolph house. She approached the side door and found it open; the lock had been jimmied with a crowbar, the broken and splintered wood of the frame near the lock bearing mute testimony to the force of the forced entry. But by whom? The door swung open squeakily as Janet pushed on it, every sense alert, her hand on the cold metal of the pistol in her pocket. She walked into the kitchen and sniffed the air cautiously. No one had been here for some hours, it appeared. She would not have to deal with some burglar, then. Peering about her in the gloom, she saw that all the furniture was covered with drop cloths and the appliances were unplugged. Grimacing, she went into the living room and began searching inside and under the couches, rug and tables. Finding nothing but dust bunnies and a few coins, she moved her search upstairs. The bathroom contained nothing interesting, although the child's room revealed a pack of cigarettes inside one of his clothes drawers. The wife's brand, perhaps. In the master bedroom, way under the bed, she found an old replica Marine WW II belt sheath survival knife, its cutting edge deeply nicked in several places. Unscrewing the endcap revealed a small compass, a string of fishing line, some hooks and a tightly rolled piece of paper. Upon it were written lines of numbers; some kind of code? Janet did not know, but replaced it in the handle to examine later. The closets of the bedroom were filled with clothing. Apparently the Randolphs (if that was their real name) had left almost everything behind that was replaceable. Janet went through the pockets of every piece of clothing in the closets, and came up with an ornate pocketwatch, which she cursorily examined and put in her belt pouch to take apart later. There were no floor or wall safes that she could find, but she spent some time testing the floorboards and closet backs to make sure.

Her search complete, Janet came downstairs, preparing to leave. As she was coming down the stairs, she caught the slight sound of the squeaky side door opening. She froze, crouching on the stairs next to the archway into the kitchen. The light came on in the kitchen; Janet heard the measured step of a pair of boots on the kitchen tile. It was probably not a burglar, then. Who could it be? The police? The FBI? The people who had broken in before? Whoever it was, Janet had to hope she could sneak past them and get away. Lowering herself very slowly on the steps, Janet did a slow peek around the corner at baseboard level. Looking about the kitchen was a tall man, dressed in a red and white costume and a cape. A fin stuck up from the center of the costume's head, proceeding down the back of the featureless mask. Janet did not recognize the new costume, but the smell was familiar. She had smelled it on the black man who had been playing cards one night in the Dirty Gene Pool. But Stuart had said that was E.G. Theorison... that meant that this was the Pontifier! It was all Janet could do to keep still. Her knees went weak and her stomach knotted. Her heart began to beat faster and she bared her teeth in a fear reaction. She almost began to pant as the adrenalin rushed through her system.

Janet tried to calm down and take deep, quiet breaths as she slowly and ever so quietly remounted the stairs, heading for the bedroom she had left but moments before. When she got there, she closed the door without a sound and pulled out the little communicator she had been given by Energon. Activating it and getting Energon, she whispered for help. She told Energon that she was at Randolph's house and that the Pontifier was there as well. He should get Linda and come as fast as he could! Janet thought she heard a noise in the hallway outside the door and cut the transmission. Janet crouched silently behind it, ready to bolt if she had to and an opportunity presented itself.

Suddenly, Janet realized that she was floating in the air. She gasped as she began floating towards the door, which opened silently before her. No one was holding it! Janet scrabbled to hold on to a wall, tearing the wallpaper and crumbling the plasterboard beneath, but the force that pulled her was inexorable; she could not stand against it, or slow her progress by a millimeter. Somehow, she doubted at even the giant vault door in the Power Systems Lab could have withstood it. Slowly she was brought down the stairs and into the light of the kitchen, to hover helplessly in the air before the Pontifier.

The Pontifier stood motionless in the center of the kitchen, looking at her for at least a full minute before he spoke. Of all the things he had thought to find here, he was not expecting a Biodyne construct.

Janet was thoroughly intimidated, but stood stiffly in the air and tried not to tremble or give any sign of her fright. He began the interrogation calmly enough, by asking who she was and what she was doing in the house. When she did not answer, he commented on her weapons. The gun and knife pulled themselves out of her pockets and hovered in the air, gripped by unseen hands. The knife began to rotate slowly in the air in front of her. My God, thought Janet. He could carve me to ribbons with the knife as I hang here, helpless!

She gulped and told him her name. Slowly over the next few minutes, he dragged one thing after another out of her, until she had told him about Randolph's possible involvement with the "Biodyne" organization. At this, the Pontifier appeared very interested (which he should have been, being E.G. Theorison). He decided aloud that he would have to question her further, at a "safer" location. At this, he took her floating behind him as he flew out of the house and into the cold night sky. After a fast trip through the frigid winter air which left Janet shivering violently despite her fur, the Pontifier descended to a house set on a large piece of property, which he explained was Theorison's.

Taking her inside the large house, he floated her into a large living room and dropped her onto an expensive Italian leather sofa, where the interrogation continued. The Pontifier apparently was attempting to take advantage of Janet's discomfort from the freezing flight in conjunction with attempting to reassure her of her security. The gun and the knife slid themselves back into her pockets as the Pontifier spoke persuasively of trust. Janet knew that it was a hollow, empty gesture; the man before her could tear the weapons from her hands and the flesh from her bones with but a thought. A weapon in her hands meant nothing -- she could not possibly do anything against this person. She was utterly in his power. She was very frightened.

* * *

The buzzer once again brought Shem awake, panting and trembling with the sickly fear that oozed through the helmet.

He paused the feed and got up, shaking with reaction. Suppressing an illogical desire to run, he looked out the window, across the bright, warm, sunlit fields, then back at the helmet, sitting on the console, its cold titanium frame seeming an object of the purest evil. After a bit, the feelings faded and he relaxed.

"Whoa." he murmured to himself. "That was one darned scary person." Now he saw why the purge had been necessary; why paranormals had eventually been brought under strict and heavy control from birth by most governments before the development of FTL drive and the opening of the colonies.

Checking his watch, he thought he had enough time for one more session. Taking another drink of water, he steeled himself. Settling the helmet on his head, set the timer for another period and resumed the data flow.

* * *

The Pontifier continued his questioning. By now, Janet had recovered some of her poise, and since he was playing at not being threatening, tried to get some of her own questions answered. The Pontifier played the game for one or two questions but lost his temper and patience quickly with matters that did not concern him, such as her brother Jarrey. As his questions plunged closer and closer to violence, Janet saw through the doubletalk he was spouting to conceal the link between himself and Theorison and tried to walk a line in her hesitant answers between truth and falsehood. Unfortunately, the Pontifier sensed that she knew more than she was telling, and misperceived her attitude as smugness. He blew into a towering rage at her impertinence.

Picking her up from the couch with the power of his mind and dangling her helplessly in the air before him, invisible hands squeezing her relentlessly, driving the breath from her, he lunged forward, growling "There are things in this life much worse than Death, Girl!".

Janet, who had regretted her words the moment they had been spoken, was completely frightened out of her wits by this. Fully expecting to be torn limb from limb by this enraged paranormal, her eyes rolled up in her head and she fainted dead away. The Pontifier examined the twitching, unconscious body momentarily as it hung before him. He cursed as the urine running down Janet's leg dripped onto his leather couch. He had, quite literally, scared the piss out of her. Everything went black.

* * *

Shem blinked his eyes behind the shields. The data feed was still coming, but nothing was showing. He reached out with one hand to stop the helmet when it resumed. He had time for a brief puzzled moment of how he had been able to see, for a half-second, from a floating perspective, outside of Janet's body, when she passed out before the inputs surged back to full and he was raptly absorbed.

* * *

Janet awoke with a start from a terrible nightmare about the Pontifier. She was ashen under her fur and trembling in fear, her hands shaking. She clutched the blanket about her tightly and sat up, shivering. She was on the couch in the back room of the Dirty Gene Pool. The once-soft fur on her inner thighs was stiff and uncomfortable. Janet pulled the blanket off and saw that she had peed herself when she had passed out. Cursing weakly and shaking with reaction, she went into the dressing room and took a hot shower, washing the dried urine out of her fur and underwear. She let the hot waters relax her a little, stop her trembling. It was a good thing no one was in the club at this time of the morning; the place was closed, the front doors locked. But of course, Janet thought, locks meant nothing to someone like the Pontifier; he could simply open the cylinders with a thought, or tear the door from its hinges if he was impatient.

She had to get away from these people, no matter what the consequences. Things were fast becoming too dangerous; too many of them knew her and had seen her in the wrong place at the wrong time. Well, then. One step at a time. First Linda. Coming back to the office, she picked up a pen and a legal pad from Linda's desk. She started trying to write, but her hands began shaking again with reaction. She sat down heavily in the chair behind the desk. For a moment she shivered under a wave of unhappiness, and thought she might burst into tears.

After a while, hugging herself, she rubbed her hands together, took a deep breath and wrote out a short letter of resignation. Standing up, she looked around the place she had danced in this past week. Had it been so short a time that all this had befallen her? She felt very alone at that moment, and sniffed forlornly. Moving to the exit door in the back, she let herself out, listening to it automatically lock itself behind her. A light, cold rain was falling, and it slicked down the soft fur on her hands and face as she walked to the subway station, the first light of dawn breaking over the city. The train was empty at this time of the morning; Janet stumbled up the stairs of her apartment building and collapsed on her bed. The tears that she had been holding back finally came in a flood, and she cried herself into a restless sleep.

* * *

Shem came to, turning off the feed and executing the logout and save sequence. He sniffed unhappily, his cheek ruffs wet with tears. "Damn." he muttered as he disconnected and stuffed the helmet in his bag. Fortunately, the morose feelings imparted by the helmet had left him by the time the Airbus arrived and he was able to greet his father cheerfully.

Shem checked his schedule sheet as he climbed out of the fresher at home, slipping into a loose cotton shirt and pair of shorts. Only a few days more of Work Cycle, and he was back on the Education Cycle. He groaned inwardly, thinking about the mathematics that were coming this month. Even farm duty was luxury compared to the relentless pace of Instructor Maelem's Calculus classes. His finger lingered on Tournament Day, now only a week off. He sighed and shook his head ruefully. Looking down at the unsightly bend in his tail, he knew that no matter how he did in the Tournament, it wasn't going to do much for him with Mren; she didn't even remember his name when she had stopped by the farm. However, on another level he clung desperately to the fantasy that if he did well he would have a chance with her. He shook his head to clear it and went down to dinner.

Dinner that evening was quite pleasant, the boisterious banter of Shem's little brother and sisters not grating at all on him the way it used to. After he had finished his food, he sat back in the new, comfy chair, fingers laced across his tummy and watched them, feeling warm and relaxed. The thought came into his mind of how Janet had agonized over her sterility; how she had dreamed someday of having kits of her own. He was glad that it had finally happened; and doubly so that now, he had a chance to relive it with her. Frowning thoughtfully and sitting back up, he wondered if he should

tell people about the Experience Module; it rightfully should be in the possession of the Reservation, but how to bring it up? His access to the system was illegal to start with. In fact, the exitstence of the Module itself was sort of illegal, what with the banning of Memory Scans. He could try and transfer it, but the thing was so large it would have to be done in sections, lest the extra traffic be noticed. On the other hand, the only way to get enough local storage to copy that one Module in its entirety would be through having the Reservation dedicate a significant portion of its spare computational storage space to it... and that would require council approval, and maybe even the purchase of a new storage system... somehow, he didn't think it was going to happen.

* * *

It was the next day at the farm. Early in the morning, just as the morning heat was setting in, Shem was refilling the irrigation tanks with Fast-Gro nutrient mix, his mind on the sensor helmet in his bag, back at the control shed. Something flashed by overhead, to touch down with a *crump* in one of the crop fields, sending stalks flying. It skidded somewhat and stopped with a *foomp* and a skyward spray of dirt.

Shem started violently and looked towards the field, spotting a flash of white through the plants. Closing the lid of the tank, he dashed over, slowing as he realized it was not one of the Reservation's white aircars. As he got closer, he realized the gleaming vehicle was not from the Reservation at all; it was a gravitic vehicle, and from the looks of it, worth as much as all the equipment on the farm put together.

The vehicle was giving off a subdued, almost imperceptible humming noise, and was, he noted, hovering rock-solid, about an inch above the ground. He waited, but no one came out of it. To judge from the wake of smashed plants and furrows, it had landed going perhaps a hundred and sixty kph, and had only stopped when it plowed its nose into a pile of soft earth at the edge of the field. Cautiously, ever so cautiously, he stepped up to it, blinking at the glossy, aerodynamically contoured exterior. He couldn't see inside through the opaque black window, and there were no handles to open the door.

Shem looked back towards the shed and had decided to call for help when a sharp hiss came from the car. Startled, Shem leapt almost six feet in the air, his heart pounding. Somehow, he quenched his instinct to run as the side of the car slowly hinged open. Revealed by the gull-wing door was a human, a young one. It sagged weakly to one side, falling out of the vehicle onto the soft loam of the field to lie in the baking heat of the sun. It's blue eyes gazed into his amber ones for a long moment in mute appeal before closing once again in unconsciousness.

Shem stepped forward and examined the boy, for a boy it was, certainly no older than perhaps ten years. He was still breathing, and his pulse, behind his ear, was steady. A small wire ran from some sort of interface implanted in the boy's wrist into the vehicle's console. Shem blinked in surprise at the expanse of custom leather and rare wood paneling that comprised the interior of the vehicle. He noted absently that he could see out of the windows perfectly, though they appeared black from outside. A small, silver-colored metal briefcase lay on the passenger seat.

Not knowing what else to do, Shem gently unplugged the wire from the boy's wrist interface and carried him back to the shed, wrinkling his nose at the unfamiliar smell of human skin oils. The child was thin, not well muscled at all. Shem could feel the bones through his skin. He peered up at the sky, blinking against the sun. Law enforcement units from Chilagoe would be here soon; the vehicle must have tripped a dozen perimeter radar sensors on its way in. He wondered why they weren't here already.

Placing him on the couch in the control shed and picking up a cool, damp cloth, Shem gently touched it to the boy's forehead and cheeks, having seen it done to a fainting female human in a mystery holovid several months prior. After a few moments, its eyelids fluttered open.

The blue eyes focused on Shem for a moment, moving up and down his body. They then moved on, to take in the rest of the shed, lingering on the farm control console.

Shem had never really been this close to a human before, except in the sensor helmet's feedback; he felt somewhat nervous. He had been prepared for the youth to be startled, upset, afraid... genetic constructs had never been popular with the majority of humanity. But this calm acceptance was beyond strange.

"Are you all right?" Shem murmured to the boy.

The expressionless blue eyes gazed at him for a moment, the brow furrowing as the boy interpreted the accent that almost all constructs had, speaking through a muzzle. "I'll be all right." he replied, his oddly cultured voice thin and piping, with a lilting accent. "I just wasn't used to the gravity, and coupled with my withdrawl from the drugs, I was overcome."

Shem blinked at the boy as his mind raced. Drugs? Gravity?

"You need not be concerned." the boy murmured tiredly, closing his eyes. "I'll explain everything. But first... where am I?"

"Uh, you're on the... uh, well, we call it the 'Reservation'." Shem murmured. "You're around ninety miles out of Chilagoe."

"Good." the boy sighed. "Australia. I was worried that I... a Reservation? Are all the people here like you? Genetic Constructs?"

"Uh, well, yes." Shem answered, blinking. Silence descended.

The boy slowly sat up, with effort. "Where is the flitter?" he asked, turning his head and peering towards the daylight at the far end of the control shed.

"Uh, the gravitic vehicle?" Shem said nervously. "It's outside, in the field where you crashed. You.. you shouldn't really sit up. Just lie back and wait for assistance. They'll be here soon."

"They? Law enforcement?" the boy said, looking slightly alarmed. "You called this in? Who did you call?" His voice rose a little, and a prickly smell arose from him.

"Well, no, I didn't call anything in, yet." Shem admitted, wrinkling his nose and making placating gestures with his hands. "But this is restricted airspace; coming in as you did, you no doubt set off half the perimeter sensors in the area, not to mention the atmospheric radars and such. In fact, they should have been here already."

The boy relaxed somewhat, smiling weakly as he once again lay back. "The vehicle is equipped with a goodly amount of

stealth gear, my dear cat fellow, one of the reasons I selected it to make my escape. But you have to get it under cover, or the people that are even now setting out in pursuit will find it."

Shem shook his head, ignoring the cat remark. The intelligence behind the words and in the boy's piercing gaze unsettled him. "I don't understand. You stole the... flitter?"

The boy tilted his head, looking for all the world as if he was re-evaluating Shem's intelligence. "Yes, I did." he said, nodding. "I had little choice in the matter, as you will see. But at this time, I would ask two things of you; that you help me conceal the vehicle and that you not report this. While I understand you have no reason to trust me, I can make it worth your while, if need be."

Shem felt nervous. Although he had no objection to intangible crimes such as hacking processing sites thousands of miles away through the nets, something as relatively straightforward as stealing a vehicle seemed terribly wrong to him. "I'm not sure..." he murmured, pausing as the boy slowly sat up.

"You **must** conceal the flitter." the boy said, staring at him. "You do not understand. It is a life or death situation. Mine, and probably yours. The people that are after me and what I have will stop at nothing to prevent it from being used against them. The men who are coming will have orders to kill."

Shem paused, feeling hopelessly out of his depth and not a little afraid. This strangely intelligent youth was disturbing, and if he wasn't suffering some sort of derangement, could possibly have put a lot of people in danger by coming here; namely Shem's family and friends. "I.. uh, well... I guess I could move it out of the field... I guess."

Moving to the console, Shem activated one of the tractors, his left ear flicking as he heard the ultrasonic whine of its compressed air starter getting its engine underway.

"Just lie down." Shem murmured to the boy, turning to leave. "I'll be right back."

"Bring the metal case from inside." the boy murmured, laying back down and closing his eyes. "I'll explain everything."

Shem went outside and stepped up into the rarely-used cabin of the tractor, his ears flicked back against the annoying noise of its engine. He manually drove the thing out to where the vehicle sat in the field and shut it down, grimacing at the new trail of smashed plants he left. After taking the silver case from the interior of the vehicle, Shem removed a tow cable from the tractor, connected it to the stubby hookup at the rear of the gravitic flitter and towed it back to the fuel storage bunker, the only cool, sheltered spot on the farm. The vehicle was easy enough to push and pull, since it was not in contact with the ground, and after moving some drums of alcohol aside, Shem got it safely in the nylocrete bunker, panting from the heat of the midday sun on his black fur.

Returning to the control shed, Shem slid his finger through the pattern that instructed the computer to return the tractor to its storage shed and turned to the boy, who was now sitting in the chair, watching him.

"Why don't you tell me what this is all about." Shem said, still feeling uncomfortably hot from the sun.

"Very well." the boy said. "Let's start with names. Names are a good beginning." He looked at Shem expectantly.

"Uhm... My name is Shem. Shem Reawn." he murmured.

"My name is Bentlam. I was born twelve years ago, on Stella Veurd, more commonly known as the Waystation; the 'gateway to the stars'. My 'mother', if you feel indulgent enough to grace her with such a name, was a processing clerk. I never knew who my father was. Perhaps even she didn't. She sold me into the Deyer Corporation Adoption Program when the results of my potential analysis were in. I was two years old, with an as-of-yet undeveloped IQ potential of almost 200. It has since been re-evaluated to nearly 300."

Shem blinked as the boy continued.

"The Deyer Corporation selected me for their most advanced training programs. They gave me an interface implant and flash-education in a number of fields. Unfortunately, or, perhaps fortunately, as only time will tell, I was a far more precocious student than any of my peers in the classes. I was afforded a great deal of discretionary research and study time. In this 'free' time, I loved roaming the nets and the sensoriums; it was a hobby of mine. I got very good at bypassing security, even getting and using other people's upper-level access codes. That's when I got the first clues about it... but it was only after four more years of searching that I found out what I did."

The boy looked at Shem, closed his eyes for a moment, then continued.

"Humanity is no longer in control of itself." he said. "We have been... conquered. Conquered by an alien race. So insidiously, so totally and completely that no one knows it. We have been under their control for the past two hundred years, our efforts directed to suit their ends."

Shem blinked.

"I was destined for the upper rungs of the corporate structure; this year I was to undergo loyalty conditioning and be shipped out to another division of the company." the boy whispered. "I knew it was now or never; if I was to escape, with proof of this, then I had to move before I was conditioned. The initial series of drugs were administered to me before I had everything ready, which was the current cause of my crash here. But... I have proof. Sensor logs, copies of data files, authorized encryption and decryption keys and more. Everything that is needed to blow this wide open and find out exactly who is really running the whole show."

Shem, quite clearly, was speechless.

* To be continued in Issue #4 *

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